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About 3000 prints, caricatures, and engravings for scrap-books, &c.

London publications procured on the shortest notice.

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THE
FORTUNATE SISTERS;

OR, THE

H I S T O R Y

OF

Fanny and Sophia Bemont.

V O L. II.

W.D. Fullalove
Salford
OF THE

HISTORY

THE BRITISH MUSEUM



VOL. II.

THE
FORTUNATE SISTERS;
OR, THE
HISTORY
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Fanny and Sophia Bemont.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE
FORTUNATE SISTERS

OF THE
HISTORICAL

Fanny and Sophia Bennett



TO BE HAD OF
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THE
FORTUNATE SISTERS;
OR, THE
HISTORY
OF
FANNY AND SOPHIA BEMONT.

MISS Williams seemed to have a gloom hanging over her lovely countenance, which was before unknown. She spake little, and when spoken to, barely gave a reply. They all observed the change, though no one knew the cause. When Mr. Oliver was earnest for the reason of this change, she said, She

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B

should

should be glad to spend some little time at home; for should Mr. and Mrs. Oliver arrive suddenly, all would be hurry, and she had many things on which she wished to consult her friends. He readily assented, and the next day, taking leave, they left Miss Fanny and her guardian alone.

Mr. Montague was seemingly very unhappy all that evening; he walked pensively across the room. Fanny begged him to compose himself, urging, that as Mrs. Montague was much recovered, she would soon return. But all her arguments were of no avail. She then sung, she played

on the harpsichord; but he grew more impatient. At last, "My dear," said he, "I must retire to rest. I am not well. I wish you a good night."

She was greatly concerned to see him take so much to heart the absence of his wife; but being quite alone, she did not stay up late.

When retired to her chamber, she sat herself down, then arose and undressed herself, then sat down again, sometimes accusing, sometimes excusing Horatio's long silence.

"Have I refused," she said, "so many offers, of title, wealth and honour, and even the guardian of my virtue, for a false unkind Horatio? No, I believe it not, if life remains, he will yet return to me with constancy and love."

So saying to herself, she took pen, ink and paper. "I'll write again, if this reaches his hand, I do not fear an answer." So musing and quite undressed, she slipped on a loose gown, and with her hair flowing round her, down she sat to write.

Not

Not long after she began, her door softly opened, and she saw Mr. Montague approaching, as much undressed as herself, all but his morning gown. Surprized, and full of wonder she sat still, till he flew with precipitate transport, and caught her in his arms.

She started, and struggling to get loose, "What do you mean, sir," said she, "by this treatment of me? You surely have lost your reason, and from a fond indulgent husband, have forsaken the marriage-bed, to turn a midnight ravisher."

“ Oh blame not me,” said he trembling, “ but rather blame yourself. Had you been less charming, I had been more constant to my wife.

“ Oh Fanny, Fanny, you have conquered me, I cannot live without you. It is impossible to hide my passion longer ; which, though my tongue were silent, shews by words, by looks, by every act, how tenderly I love you.—Nay, do not push me so sternly from you, the time, the place, the favourable moment, all conspire to gratify my love—I must and will be happy. Your tears cannot prevail ; yet, let me kiss them off, though

though they go like daggers to my heart."

"Oh, stop, ungenerous man! was it for this," she cried, "you taught me to distinguish virtue from vice? was it for this you nourished me so tenderly, to rob me of my peace of mind, and all that is worth living for?"

"Ungenerous girl!" replied he, "first to rob me of my heart, then treat me with contempt! Honour, virtue, 'tis all but name; the heart is all; you have mine in your possession, take it, mould it to your liking; give me but your love. I will

 B 4 here-

8 THE FORTUNATE SISTERS.

hereafter take you beyond all search; you shall live with me as your wit and beauty merits; you shall be my queen, and I your constant slave."

So saying, he caught her in his arms, and was carrying her towards the bed; but, assisted by her fears, she instantly sprung from him, and hastening to the bell, which he had not secured, rung it with all the violence imaginable. Then turning to him as quick as thought,

"This, this," said she, "was basely done! But take back your worthless heart, and your more worthless

worthless self; and know, I have a mind within, formed under your own tuition, that will stand my friend. Is it right for you to attempt that virtue you should protect? Think on your past misconduct, you have deceived yourself and me—Farewel.”

So saying, she went instantly to the door, where meeting the footman, Montague turning another way, she had just recollection enough to ask, “Did you not hear some noise? I am terrified to death. Send Sukey here; I cannot sleep alone.”

"I did not hear any thing," replied the man, "but we had better call my master."

"No; send her," said she, perhaps 'tis fancy."

The servant went his way, when Montague returning said, "Forgive me, my dear Fanny, I will not offend you more, you may safely sleep alone. What you conquered by your beauty, you have also subdued by your virtue. Conscious of my crime, I will endeavour to overcome my passion; and if time will not conquer it, death shall."—Immediately he took his leave.

Sukey

Sukey then came.—“Stay here to-night,” said Fanny. “Either my imagination roves, or I really am disturbed.—I wish your mistress were at home.”

“I wish so too,” replied the girl, “but indeed I think she will not live; for John and I both heard a noise too; it cannot be all imagination, yet all the house is fast.”

“Well, get in my bed, child,” said Fanny, “for I shall sit up and write.”

Indeed she wanted time to recollect herself, and form some

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plan to act by. To remain under the same roof with one who had twice attempted her ruin, and who made no scruple of declaring a passion for her, and had even offered to leave his wife, and spend his life with her, yet appeared a tender husband, proved him both false and deceitful, therefore unsafe to be trusted. The first attempt had been charged upon Sir Thomas, the last was too open to admit of any disguise: and had she not been up, there was little reason to suppose either tears or intreaties would have stopped his unruly passion.

She

She then resolved not to remain another night in the house, but to seek some safer, if not so delightful a refuge; and putting up what necessary apparel she might immediately want, she determined first to call at Mr. Williams's, but not to mention either her intention, or what had passed at home.

Early in the morning she went down, and taking her things, walked on for some little distance, till being near the road-side, a little neat cottage took her eye as she passed; she went up to it, and after some apology, adapted to the purpose, asked to rest herself

herself there, till some carriage should pass by, to take her up.

The good people made her welcome in the best manner they were able, and as they refused to accept of any acknowledgment themselves, she made it to a little daughter, who had now procured a chaise, into which she got, and ordered the driver to convey her to Woolwich with all possible speed, for which she would give him a crown.

She had scarcely proceeded two miles on her journey, when she discovered Mr. Oliver on horseback, and calling to him, they
stopped;

stopped. After the usual compliments, "I think," said Fanny, "our meetings hitherto have been fortunate; but why are you so grave?"

"Let us quit the public road," said he, "and the first proper house we come to, we will alight at it."

When they had arrived at the house, and had entered the room, "I am sorry, madam," said Mr. Oliver, "that my father's long absence obliges me to leave England, and you; for indeed, I think you want a friend. I did not like Mr. Montague's behaviour when

when you were so surprized. I am sure of the innocence of Sir Thomas; and am positive, no one could easily have escaped from the window he suggested. I would have you be on your guard.—

“ You are silent—I know he has hitherto proved your friend, but friendship sometimes ripens into love. His behaviour to Mrs. Montague carries in it, to my apprehension, more of constraint than affection.

“ Use your own discretion, and pardon my giving you my advice so freely. But should it be as I suspect, you will have
more

more to fear from one of his turn, than from a professed libertine; for the latter prides himself in his honour, while the other would stab you in the dark."

Miss Bemont was unwilling to be too hasty in declaring Mr. Montague's treatment of her, yet admired Mr. Oliver's tender care, and quick discernment.

"What would you have me do, sir?" said she.

"Why, madam, where were you now going?"

"To

"To meet you, sir, as it has happened."

"Ah, my charming girl," said Mr. Oliver, "there is something concealed under that speech. I wish young Villars was your's, and you were out of danger. Were I not obliged to leave you, this arm should be your guard, my fortune should supply your wants, and you should never be in need of a friend. Nor do I mean you alone, but your sister too: not but I think she may be happy, as her uncommon flow of spirits may enable her to surmount troubles which you, my Fanny, would sink under."

"What

“What would you have me do?” again she repeated, “Lock myself up, and converse through the key-hole?”

“No, my angel,” replied he, “retire to some friend, if you are fixed on Villars, and think he will be constant. I trust I shall come back; and if you remain single then, I will take care of you myself.”

“But then,” said she, “what is to become of Miss Peggy while your are absent?”

“I shall take her with me,” replied Mr. Oliver. “Next
Thursday

Thursday joins our hands. I was coming to inform you of it, and to ask your presence, and also Mr. Montague's. You sigh—Why that downcast look! that falling tear! there is something more than common labouring in your breast."

Not all Mr. Oliver's persuasions could induce Fanny to confess her perplexed situation, lest that friend to honour and virtue, should, from his too great zeal, seek to resent the occasion, and by breeding an open rupture, cause Mrs. Montague to be unhappy; when, by her secret absence,

fence; all confusion of that kind might be avoided.

When they had dined they parted, after Mr. Oliver had promised not to mention his having seen her, and that he would give her another meeting before his departure.

Mr. Oliver then proceeded on to Mr. Montague's, whom he found full of trouble on the absence of Fanny; who, he said, had gone out early that morning; that he was informed she had called the servants up the night before, saying she had heard somebody in her room, and was afraid to sleep

sleep alone. "It is very strange," continued he, "I was indisposed, and went to bed early, nor can I guess the cause of so much confusion."

Mr. Oliver made no reply, but immediately surmised the true cause of Fanny's trouble, though her prudence had prevented her revealing it. Mr. Montague accepting the invitation to the wedding, Mr. Oliver took his leave.

Fanny proceeded on to Woolwich, where she met with a sincere welcome, and a pressing invitation to stay till the wedding was over, which it was highly necessary

fary should be consummated; though somewhat contrary to Mr. Williams's wishes, in the absence of young Oliver's friends, as he was determined to go to them, and had their consent to the nuptials.

Every thing was conducted with gentility, without extravagance, and Peggy was made a happy bride.

Mr. Montague was present at the ceremony, he was obliging and polite to all, though only distantly so to Fanny, of whose absence from home he took no notice, and returned to Richmond

mond the same evening, notwithstanding their pressing invitations to spend some time with them.

Fanny had now a new habitation to seek, but with the assistance of Mr. Oliver she was not long at a loss; for it being mentioned to Mrs. Williams, a room was immediately set apart for her, and Mr. Williams was to draw upon Mr. Montague for her board, upon which terms only she consented to stay.

Mr. Montague soon settled this matter, as indeed any delay on his part must have subjected him to an explanation of Fanny's motives

tives for her removal; a circumstance which, next to the gratifying his own libidinous inclination, he had every reason to avoid.

Things being so far settled, the bridegroom and his lady prepared for their departure, and were to have set out as on the next day, when the sound of carriages and loud raps at the door, announced the arrival of some new guests. Indeed they proved welcome ones: for they were no other than Mr. and Mrs. Oliver. The joy on all sides, at their happy meeting, was without alloy.

The voyage of the new-married couple was, for the present, laid aside, and all due preparation made for the settlement of the elder Mr. and Mrs. Oliver in England, who did not fail to testify their full satisfaction in the new alliance; then insisting that one habitation should, for the present, accommodate them all, it was readily agreed to, and a house being taken in London, for that purpose, as soon as every thing could be got ready, they all removed to it.

Mrs. Montague returned home quite recovered, and testified her surprize at Fanny's removal from her

her family, of which she had promised to take the charge during her absence, the breach of which, she said, justly incurred her displeasure; in which her husband readily joined, in order to prevent a suspicion of the cause.

Sophia was soon anxious to see her sister; and finding at their meeting, every thing so agreeable to Fanny, determined not to leave her again.

Mr. Williams then, at Sophia's request, paid a second visit to Mr. Montague, to settle with him the terms for her board, &c. which he amicably and readily adjusted.

But all this while Fanny lay under the censure of being deficient in every tye of friendship and gratitude; all which she bore with, rather than, by clearing herself, to render Mr. Montague unhappy.

After staying with their friends throughout the summer, young Mr. Oliver and his lady again prepared for their departure, for as they had large plantations in Virginia, the presence of one of the partners was indispenfibly necessary.

It was with great concern they parted, for Peggy had fo far gain-

ed the love of Mr. and Mrs. Oliver, that she might be said to share it equally with their son, than whom, no one could be more indulged. They took Miss Polly Williams, Mrs. Oliver's younger sister, with them, and set out with the blessings of all that knew them.

Their friends soon had an account of their safe arrival; and the success which attended all their affairs, added to the mutual happiness of the wedded pair, seemed to mark them as the favourites of heaven.

Fanny and Sophia had remained at Mr. Williams's without interruption, yet could not part with those two friends without great reluctance; for their friends were few, as Mrs. Montague had taken the opportunity to break off all intercourse with them, and they never saw her, but she broke out into very severe reproaches on Fanny; all which she bore with great patience, never making any other answer, than, that her conscience was clear of every cause for such imputation.

Fanny was still continually solicited in marriage by several gentlemen of character and family;
but

but nothing could shake her resolution of being faithful to her Villars. And the contract between them became at last no secret, for Mr. Montague had taken the liberty to read part of the letter she was writing on the night when he entered her chamber, and had mentioned the contents to Mrs. Montague, whose displeasure with Fanny was carried, through his insinuations, to that height of ill-manners, that she would stop at nothing that had the least appearance of lessening her character in the esteem of her friends; so that she was often obliged to bear with that as rail-

lery only, which was in fact little short of an affront.

Add to this, that Mr. Williams still continued to have a dislike to Villars, on Peggy's account, though it began to subside greatly, now she was so much better settled. At best it was known, Villars could only have had what little Mr. Williams had been able to secure of his father's effects; which, though the sum was not known, could not be much; but his supposed want of fortune had no effect on Fanny, whose sentiments were otherwise bent, for she would often say, A cottage and content exceeded a coach

coach and fix: and, That true love could never change.

Mr. Oliver had not omitted to tell Sophia of the high regard which Sir Thomas L—— had expressed for her; and that when he returned from his travels, as she would be every day increasing in age and accomplishments, he thought Sir Thomas would not fail to acquaint her with it.

This was an offer every way suited to Sophia's inclination, as she was not a little fond of making a figure in life; and she thought it an opportunity of gratifying her darling wishes,

which she might never have with any other gentleman, considering his fortune, and the probability of his succeeding to his uncle's title, who had never been married, and was very far advanced in years.

Yet, she said, she was fearful, if ever she should be able to look upon him, without a remembrance of the place where their acquaintance began; and in that light, she thought she would rather never see him more.

In some few months after Mr. Oliver's departure, Mr. Williams was seized with a violent fever, which

which in three days, two of which he was delirious, put an end to his life.

Mrs. Williams thus was left a disconsolate widow, without even the means of a sufficiency to lighten her troubles; for though he had been in great business, he lived to the extent of his income; and the 2000 l. he had advanced upon his daughter's marriage, was thought by many to be part of the property of Mr. Villars.

Mrs. Williams's pride would not permit her to make her case public, so that the Miss Bemont's

board-money was all they had to live upon; which was but barely sufficient, indeed scarcely that, to make any appearance. They were her confidants in all her affairs, and from a sincere regard determined to remain with her. She had only one child to provide for, then about eleven years old, which, on the knowledge of Mr. Williams's death, was sent for by Mr. Oliver to Virginia.

Nothing now remained, but to endeavour to live on a little with content; which they did: only Sophia would sometimes, in secret, wish that her lot had been cast in a gayer sphere. Yet her affection

affection to her sister, and friendship for Mrs. Williams, made her situation very easy to her.

Mr. Montague now began to be very remiss in the payment of their money, which, at times, put them to great difficulties. They now, more than ever, stood in need of such a friend as Mr. Oliver, who had often sent to them to go and share with him his ample fortune; but not knowing of their distressed situation, had not remitted them any thing to contribute to their present comfort.

Mr.

Mr. Montague, after repeated messages from Fanny and Sophia, came himself to answer them. They had not seen him for a considerable time; their situation was retired, and Mrs. Williams, Fanny, Sophia, and a servant girl were the whole of the family. Fanny could not see him without a dread, which was so visible in her countenance, that he could not but observe it.

After Mr. Montague had paid Mrs. Williams the money which was due, he requested to speak a few words to Miss Bemont in private.

Fanny

Fanny told him, that as there was nothing in their affairs which was a secret, he might there declare what he had to inform her of; but this he refused, saying, it entirely respected her engagement abroad, and that though her affairs were public, those of another ought to be paid some regard to.

As Mr. Montague's connections were pretty extensive, she thought it might be so, and withdrew with him into another room.

He then told her he was credibly informed, that Mr. Villars was settled at Antigua. That
being

being in an unhappy situation, and no prospect of a provision offering, necessity had compelled him to accept the proposal from a planter of marrying his daughter, who had taken a liking to him. That his motive for informing her of it, was, that she might not reject any offer of a future settlement to her advantage: and added, that in every thing she might command his service.

Fanny very respectfully thanked him for his kindness, but told him the regular payment of the money due to Mrs. Williams for their board, and to herself and
sister

sister for cloaths, &c. was all she had at present to request, unless he should at any time gain fresh intelligence of Mr. Villars, whose happy situation in life she should be, at all times, glad to hear of, however unmindful he might be of her.

Mr. Montague then gave her a ten pound note, promising to send her a further supply; and, without taking any notice of past transactions, he took his leave.

Fanny made no secret of the intelligence which Mr. Montague had communicated to her. Displeasing as it was, she thought
it

it not wholly improbable, especially as she had not heard from Mr. Villars for some considerable time, notwithstanding he knew how to send to her, let her abide where it would.

She, sometimes in solitude, sometimes in conversation, lamented his want of constancy; then, checking herself, would say, "Why, if he is happy, should I repine? A wish beyond his happiness is self-interest, a temper of all others the most to be despised."

As a considerable length of time had elapsed since they heard from

from Mr. Montague, their necessities obliged them to send again to him. The answer returned was, that he wished to speak to Miss Bemont herself.

Fanny went, not fearing to trust herself under his roof in the presence of his wife; but when she entered, the house and attendants made a very different appearance from what they had usually done. Being shewn into a parlour where he was sitting alone, she approached very slowly, and seated herself just at the entrance.

“ Do

“ Do not be afraid, my dearest Fanny,” said he, “ I am not going to offer you any thing more than is consistent to your own inclination to agree to. I am sorry for the cause of this visit, but it was better to let you know, that the impresson your growing beauties made on my mind, I may say from the hour I first beheld you, never abated.

“ When I was married, I flattered myself, the affections of a tender wife, and love to the dear pledges of our mutual connection, would have settled my regard to you into a lasting friendship only ; but, alas ! it ripened
into

into love, till grown past moderation, I took those steps which, happily, your virtue and prudence have baffled and defeated.

“ Since then, I have flown to other methods, to drown those thoughts that were ever fixed on you. I flew to cards, and alas! the chance has so long run against me, that I have lost my all; and what is more aggravating, not only that, but your’s. What reparation I can make, I will, if fortune again should favour me.

“ Mrs. Montague is now gone to some friends of her’s; if she succeeds, I hope you will not suffer;

fer; if she should not succeed, and you will return to us, what lays in my power, I'll chearfully do for you and your sister Sophia."

Thus unexpectedly plunged into deep distress, Fanny could not imagine what was to follow: but she told him, she was sorry to be the innocent cause of any one's ill-doing; and it was a very small shadow of hope, he could ever have entertained of accomplishing his designs on her.

The loss of her fortune, though by unlawful means, perhaps was
not

not designed: yet she could not but consider, the breach of friendship on the part of Mrs. Montague, together with the many undeserved reproaches and false reports of her, which he had joined in propagating, was a strange method of testifying his affections. —

However, she would consider of what he had told her, and let him hear from her.

She then returned home, full of grief and trouble, and acquainted Mrs. Williams of their situation, at that time not any thing better than her own. Sophia,

phia, more than any, lamented this reverse of fortune.

From day to day they thought of various methods to pass along life's heavy road. They could not think of separating, nor could Mrs. Williams consent to make her case known to Mr. and Mrs. Oliver, lest it might prove a detriment to her daughter.

Fanny at last gave up every hope of extricating herself from her present distress, and was, one day, in tears lamenting her sad, sad state, and Villars, the inconstant Villars, more than all, when
Mrs.

Mrs. Oliver, unexpectedly, came in upon her.

This lady they did not often see, for Mrs. Williams, not being able to make the appearance she wished, did not visit her, and Mrs. Oliver seldom went out of town.

Surprizing Fanny in her loose undress, and in tears, she tenderly enquired the occasion. And being no stranger to her engagement with Villars, and supposing that to be the cause of her present distress, kindly expostulated with her, urging her to forget him, and resume those lovely

smiles, that made every one behold her with admiration, esteem and love.

Fanny told her, she had indeed, too often thought on Mr. Villars, but that he was not the cause of her present troubles.

Being pressed by the importunity of Mrs. Oliver, she at last revealed the reason of her present inquietude, concealing the name of Mr. Montague, fearing, so tender was she of another's character, of being a detriment to him, by whom she had been so great a sufferer.

Mrs.

Mrs. Oliver expressed the greatest surprize at the conduct of Fanny's guardian, and promised, if possible, to see justice done her; assuring her, that if she could by appointment get him there, and acquaint her with the time, she would be sure to meet him. "And possibly," said she, "when he finds you have friends who will support your cause, he will of himself redress your wrongs, and you may regain your own."

Fanny thanked her for the offer, and promised to procure the meeting.

When they had just finished this discourse, Mrs. Williams came in, and was not a little surprized to find Fanny and Mrs. Oliver in such close conversation, as since the night of Mr. and Mrs. Oliver's arrival, they had but seldom seen each other.

But Fanny, who was always open in her dealings, told Mrs. Williams what had passed, who, taking the obligation to herself, in a very polite manner expressed her sense of it.

With much intreaty Mrs. Oliver stayed dinner, and after telling Mrs. Williams that her daughter

ter

ter was expected in town soon, which was the cause of her visit, and promising to come again whenever Fanny sent for her, she left them in much better spirits than she found them:— Mrs. Williams to rejoice in the hope of once more seeing her child, and the Miss Bemonts in the prospect of the presence of their friend Mr. Oliver.

Fanny sent immediately to Mr. Montague, desiring him to fix some day when he would call upon her; which he readily did, flattering himself, that from her sending, possibly her necessities had wrought a change in her

sentiments, and that he might gain his desires.

Be that as it may, he came to appointment, as did Mrs. Oliver, who had, till then, as to personal attractions, passed unnoticed to Fanny; but dress, that ornament to most, had made so great a change in her, that Fanny could scarcely refrain from expressing her surprize.

She was, indeed, a very fine woman, and with the addition of an elegant dress, made a very lovely appearance. Mrs. Williams, Fanny, and Sophia were all ready to shew their respect,
by

by entertaining her in the best manner in their power.

When Mr. Montague came, Fanny received him in the parlour; and after an apology for the trouble she had given him, proceeded to tell him the distressed situation the alteration of his affairs had thrown her into, and that she must have some certainty of a yearly provision for her sister and herself, even if the principal of their fortunes lay undischarged for the present.

He told her, he had already offered to take them into his family again, and he would take

care to settle the difference between her and Mrs. Montague, so that every thing should be to their satisfaction; but as to a separate payment for their board and other necessaries, it did not lay in his power to make it at present.

Fanny then hinted at his past conduct, as being a sufficient ground for her not complying with his proposals; "but," added she, rising, "if you do not choose to settle with me, I am not without friends, who will take that office upon them."

He

He hastily stepped to her," and by his countenance gave her little reason to think, had time and place been equally convenient, that she would have received any better treatment than before.

"My dearest girl—" said he, and was going on, but at his approach she quitted the room, when Mrs. Oliver and Mrs. Williams met her.

"My dear," said Mrs. Oliver, "what is the matter?—has the gentleman and you compromised affairs?"

D 5 "No,"

“No, madam,” said Fanny,
“he has proposed——”

“Come, child, we will hear
his proposals from himself.”

So saying, she turned into the
room to Mr. Montague, and im-
mediately stiffened with surprize.
He was not in a much better
state.

“What!” said he, “do my
eyes deceive me, or do I see my
long lost sister?”

She slowly approached him.
“My brother!” said she, “my
once much loved brother! Joy
and

and grief alternately affect me. How should I have rejoiced, had you not," turning to Fanny, "here forfeited that love I once bore you."

He was so awed by surprise, joy, and shame, that he was near fainting on the spot; which Fanny observing, cried out, "Oh, fir, Oh, madam, Mr. Montague will die!"

They rang for something for him to drink, and when he was a little recovered, "My dearest sister," said he, "if I may be allowed to call you by that tender name, I stand like a criminal be-

D 6. fore

fore you—I must indeed plead guilty—my conscience tells me so—yet I hope, if you are my judge, you will shew mercy.—I have no excuse to make; but have been hurried on from one bad deed to another, till, if you had not come, I must blush to own, though a man, I know not where it would have ended.

“That excellent young lady, a pattern for her sex, and her sister, I have involved in trouble; how to make them amends is what most distresses me.”

He stopped, and a sudden gush of tears relieved him.

“Alas!

"Alas! my brother," said she,
 "I hope you are not married!"

He then proceeded to tell her
 all, and indeed much more than
 Miss Bemont had related. "But
 tell me," said he, "among all
 wonders, how you came back to
 life again."

"Your story," replied Mrs.
 Oliver, "so distresses me, I have
 no time to think of my own.
 But most of all I wonder, how
 you came by such a charge."

"From, Oh, sister, from your
 once lov'd Bemont."

"How!"

"How!" said she, "heavens forbid!" and running first to Fanny, then to Sophia, "sure your name is not Bemont!"

"Yes," was replied by both.

"The only man," continued she, "on earth for whom I once wished to live.—Now," turning to Mr. Montague, "now you have more than ever distressed me—If but for my sake, surely you might have taken care of two such helpless orphans.—I sure shall go distracted—Oh, what have these two innocents suffered!—no one to whom to tell their mournful story!"

Fanny

Fanny and Sophia stood quite confounded, betwixt joy and sorrow. Joy, to think they had found a friend; sorrow, to find that friend sunk in trouble.

At last Fanny went up to Mrs. Oliver. "I hope, madam, my sister and I—"

"Hope every thing, my dears," said she, "that lays in my power; much does not; what does, you shall both command, till your brother comes."

"Brother, madam!" said each.

"Yes,

"Yes, my dear sweet girls," replied she, kissing them again and again, "my Charles is your brother."

"What! Mr. Oliver our brother!"

"Yes, the same," said she.

On this intelligence the sisters ran to each other.

"Was ever happiness like this?" said Fanny. "In one day relieved from the depth of distress! to find a friend! and to find a brother!"

"I did

"I did not know," said Sophia, "I ever had a brother."

"Oh, yes," said Fanny, "he was ran away with, when very young; I heard something of it, though imperfectly."

"No matter how," said Sophia, "he has lived to be the deliverer of us both."

The joy and happiness that Fanny felt was but imperfect. Her Villars was another's; and she had rather have found him true, than have had all the world in friendship with her: not but she sincerely loved her brother,
and

and had often in silence mourned her unhappy fate, that she should be so constant; as, but for that, Oliver had been her's, and in him she should have had a friend and husband in one. Yet now she had the highest reason to reflect with pleasure on the disappointment, as had that event taken place, they would both have been undone for ever. But at the present, however, she appeared chearful.

Mrs. Oliver told Mr. Montague, he must think of some method to support his family, of more certainty than the gaming-table. That his wife must return

turn to her family. And that she hoped he would alter his conduct, which would be the only means of restoring him to her affection and love.

“As to the Miss Bemonts,” continued she, “they must be taken care of; the principal of their fortunes shall be a future consideration; but Mrs. Williams may depend on the money for their board, and the young ladies of such sums as their apparel and other necessaries require.”

Mr. Montague replied, What concerned the young ladies, he had

had already proposed in part, with this only difference of their returning back to him again.

At this Mrs. Oliver shook her head, and it is to be observed, that she only of the company knew the whole of his treatment of Fanny.

As to the means, he did not indeed, at present, know how to put it in execution, for he was fearful his family must want bread, and he become a beggar. "But," added he, "the worst effect of my poverty is, I fear," looking stedfastly at his sister, "the losing your esteem."

"Well,"

"Well," said she, "that may perhaps be regained. But it grows late, and I must return home, and suppose you must do the same." Then telling him when and where to meet her, and know her further sentiments, they both took leave.

As Fanny and Sophia were walking in the fields next day, closely engaged in conversation, "Sister," said Sophia, "how very reverse are our changes in life! For my part, I shall never depend for the future, when I rise in the morning, of having a bed to lay on at night. And if I were even deprived of that, I should

I should not despair of recovering it again, and even more."

"It is very true," said Fanny, "but some very unpleasant changes have fallen to our lot; for who could have thought, after all the vows and strict engagements Horatio laid himself under, he would have proved false?" "I am sorry," said Sophia, "you are so unhappy in your love. It is pity you did not accept Sir Thomas L——'s addresses." "No," replied Fanny, "I can never like another, and had rather Horatio had kept to his engagement, though he had returned stripped of every shilling, than have Sir Thomas with title, wealth,

wealth, and honours all in expectation." "What is your objection? Do you not like him then?"

"No, indeed," said Fanny.

"And then such a sudden change in his principles; I fear it will not last till his return. Yet if it should, and *you* should like him, I wish you may have the proposal.—A cottage for me,—a coach for you.—There is something so pleasing in a rural country life, so innocent and pleasant, I could be always happy in the enjoyment of it."

"I cannot think so," said Sophia, "a handsome carriage, smart livery, and plenty of money to supply every want, and to enjoy

every pleasure which fancy leads one to, are just what I should like; then in the height of summer it might be well enough to take a few weeks change in your country cottage.

“ But as for Sir Thomas L— I like him well enough; at least I think so; but really his person is less known to me, than any one I ever conversed with; but be that as it may, I would not have him for all his wealth, and all those conveniencies that wealth would purchase; for unless I could forget all past transactions, I could not be happy.” “ You do not know that,” said Fanny, “ time wears

wears off many things displeasing, and it may wear off that."

"No, no, it never could," replied Sophia, "I am sure I never could converse on that strange subject with him, therefore I will not talk of him any more."

After some little recollection, Sophia said to her sister, "My dear, I think there is to be a fair kept some day next week upon yonder green; and there will be dancing in the long barn by the side of it, by the young people of the village; I should like to go much, should not you?"

"Yes," said Fanny, "I should like it well enough, if I were sure we should not be known."

"Oh," replied Sophia, "I will contrive that, if you will go."

It was accordingly agreed, and preparations made suited to the occasion, and the intended disguise of their persons. Neat linen gowns, plain, though fine linen, and large but handsome bonnets were provided, and they were quite happy in the thought of that variety there was between a plain country dancing-bout, and those glittering forms and envious remarks which are to be found

found in the generality of polite assemblies.

Mrs. Oliver, who was very tender of the happiness of her new acquaintance, did not fail to pay them a second visit in a few days. They were happy in the sight of their benefactress, for such they looked on her to be. She enquired into their several little wants, and after the deficiency of Mrs. Williams's money, due from her brother, all of which she discharged.

Upon their enquiring after Mr. Montague, she told them she had seen him, but not at her own

home, for though Mr. Oliver was an extraordinary tender and polite husband to her, he was rather fond of money; and except what was advanced for his adopted son, in which he was very generous, in his common current expences he was rather saving: and therefore she did not choose, at present, either to mention her brother, or the near relation in which the young ladies stood to his adopted Charles, lest it might prove a disadvantage to him as his son; or to them, as she might not then have it so much in her power to do for them as she wished.

As

As to her brother, she would endeavour to allow him a quarterly sum, sufficient to support him decently; more than that would only be a means of indulging his passion for gaming, which was what she first wished him to conquer.

After thanking her for her care, and promising the most profound secrecy, Fanny expressed a desire of knowing by what means her brother came under the care of Mrs. Oliver.

That lady readily gratified so laudable a curiosity, and entering into particulars, informed her

of her acquaintance with Mr. Bemont, her request of Charles to be constantly resident with her, the refusal of that request, and the method she took to secure him, as before related.

“Not,” proceeded she, “that I intended to detain your brother more than two or three months whilst I went to Ireland, nor even so long a time without his father’s knowledge; for I sent him a line before I went on board the ship, though from the account I have since had, I have reason to think it did not reach him; but lest that should fail, I also desired a gentleman to call
on

on him, to dispel every fear on his son's account, by informing him both of his safety, and where he was gone, but I find he was not then at home, and so missed of the information.

“ The ship in which we were embarked, was, in a violent storm, split in pieces, and every one lost, except myself, my child, one of the common sailors, and a merchant's son. To the latter we were indebted for our lives.

“ He being an excellent swimmer, bid me hold fast by him, which, with the child fixed to my breast, I did; then support-

ed by a small plank, he bore us up in sight of a merchant ship, which being larger and better fitted than ours, had weathered out the storm, and was coming towards us with great speed. The youth swam up to the ship, and those on board putting out the long-boat, they saved us.

“ On board of this ship, which was bound from Glasgow to Virginia, were several passengers: amongst others Mr. Oliver, my present husband. The captain was a very humane compassionate man; and indeed the whole ship's company seemed actuated by the same

same benevolent spirit with their commander.

“ By their tender care and kindness, aided with some few necessary medicines from the doctor, we were soon recovered of our fatigue, and our healths fully re-established.

“ As soon as I had a little recovered, I was seized with so deep a grief for the loss of my brother, as brought me into a very weak state. But time, that softener of trouble, a little wore off that, and Mr. Oliver's tender care of me and Charles, inspired

me with sentiments of gratitude next to love.

“To be the cause of depriving him of the care of a tender father, of his narrowly escaping with life, and of his being in a situation in which he had no friend but myself, often caused me to shed torrents of tears; and made me determine to give encouragement to Mr. Oliver’s addresses, which I could see would soon follow.

“Upon enquiry I found he was a gentleman of great wealth, and had large plantations in Virginia. As to his person, when
you

you see him, you will allow it agreeable without any exception, and his conversation such as was calculated to win upon the affections of one not previously engaged. When he made that declaration of his regard for me, which I had for some time reason to expect, I considered, that as I was going to a strange country, and with an helpless infant, it would be very imprudent to reject such a proposal. My Charles, I told him, was the son of a dear friend of mine, and was left entirely destitute; that I had adopted him as my own; and without he would do the same, I could not consent to the union. This

he readily agreed to, and Charles became our own, acknowledged by us as such, and to this hour he is ignorant of the contrary; for whatever little impressions he might have had of his father, they soon wore off.

“ Upon our arrival at Virginia we were married, and Charles then changed his name with mine. From that time to this I have lived in a state of uninterrupted happiness; excepting that sometimes when I thought of my friends in England, my uncertainty of their fate, would throw a gloom over me for a few hours. My Charles, I doubt not
will

will inherit his father's fortune; he might have been advantageously married in Virginia, but as we had a sufficiency, we were desirous he should have a wife of his own choice, and I am very glad he has been so happy to fix on one every way deserving his esteem and our regard." Mrs. Williams bowed, and they all thanked Mrs. Oliver for the trouble she had taken in relating her short narrative. "Since I came to England," continued she, "I made enquiry after Mr. Bemont, and heard he had been dead many years. I found my brother had quitted his house, and could get no intelligence whither he was removed;

moved; and little thought any one of either family was so near me."

Fanny informed Mrs. Oliver of the village fair which was drawing on, and of their intentions to be there; asking her at the same time, if she thought it imprudent, or if any harm might arise from it. Mrs. Oliver, who was still very lively, and agreeable to every innocent recreation, told them, that so far from it, if they should like to go, and fear prevented them, rather than they should be disappointed of their pleasure, she would go with them, and walk to and fro during their stay,

stay, which she supposed would not be long, as she apprehended curiosity was their chief motive for going. They thanked her for her indulgence, and promised to be ready when she came. Indeed they now applied to her, as to a parent, telling her, their brother must not think to have all her affection.

When the day arrived, the two young ladies took much more pains with their rustic dresses, than if they had indeed been ornamenting themselves for a ball-room, or the most polite assembly. When Mrs. Oliver came, she said, she never had seen two such

pretty country lasses in her life; that their dress exceedingly became them, only she feared they would spoil the dance, by robbing all the rest of the damsels of their sweet-hearts.

“ I am sure,” replied Fanny, “ I shall not rob any of them; for in my own proper person, and with all the advantages of dress, I cannot keep one constant, therefore can have no encouragement, any more than desire, to make new conquests.

“ As for Sophia,” continued she, “ a coronet runs so much in her head, that she stands little chance

chance there, unless she can at last substitute a chaplet of flowers in its room." "Ah," replied Sophia, "indeed that is the thing most likely to be picked up there."

They then set off, and walked some time about the fair: there were several of the neighbouring gentlemen and ladies at it. As they stood at one of the stalls, a genteel youth, the picture of health, who was buying favours, turned round, and fixed his eyes with admiration on Fanny and Sophia, till they, unused to such sort of treatment, blushed exceedingly. "Faith, ladies," said he,
in

in the unpolished style of a country education, "you need not blush, you are too handsome for women, they may take the pictures of angels from such as you." This rough compliment served to embarrass them ten times more; and they desired Mrs. Oliver to walk on. "Nay," said he, "don't be offended, ladies, I meant no harm." Fanny was for going home, "Oh, no," said Sophia, "let us go to the dance, however."

After another turn round the fair, and they had drank tea, they went into the long barn. The company were dancing when they entered,

entered, and as soon as that dance was finished, were drawing back to their seats, but some of them observing the ladies, stopped to look at them; when a genteel young woman came up, and asked if they would be pleased to come forward and dance. Mrs. Oliver very kindly thanked her, said, they could not stay, and hoped no offence would be taken, for as they had been to the fair, hearing the music they had come in. "Oh, no, madam," said she, "but if you cannot stay, pray let the young women stay a little: my father and brothers are here. I will call them." And without

without waiting for a reply, away she tript.

While she was gone, up came the same lad, who had accosted them in the fair. "Do not you dance, ladies?" said he, rather more polite than before. Mrs. Oliver had just answered him in the same manner as she had done to the young woman, when the lass came back, out of breath, and bringing her father, and one of her brothers with her. The former, who seemed to be one of the top of the company, bowed and asked them to go further on. "Our Tom here," said he, "and Poll will take care of your daughters,

ters, and my t'other son, Will, will be here soon." Mrs. Oliver thanked him, and turned to go, when Sophia begged to stay a little; Fanny made no objection, and they accepted the farmer's invitation.

The young villager then whispered Sophia, "If you dance, pray take me for a partner; no harm shall come to you." Sophia smiled, and nodded her head; for she thought, to address him out of his own way, would be entirely out of the character she had assumed. Joy sparkled in his eyes at this assurance, and seats being brought they sat down.

The

The farmer's son, who had not yet spoken, now took a nosegay out of his button-hole, and presented it to Fanny, who curtsied and took it. Fleming, for so was the other youngster called, immediately took three favours from his pocket, and presented one to each. They would fain have excused themselves from accepting of them, as the ribbands were very rich, and three yards of it to each favour. He insisted on their taking them, saying they were but trifles, and he had, at present, nothing better to offer. When he gave Sophia her's, he pressed her hand between his, and by the sigh he gave, she guessed

guessed his meaning, but drew back her hand, and smiled.

After a refreshment of cakes and ale, during which time mirth and happiness seemed to reign through the whole company, they went to dancing again. When that dance was done, young Thomas, the farmer's son, pressed Fanny to dance, which she positively refused; when Fleming who had never forsaken Sophia, put his arm round her waist, and said, "Do not take example from your sister, but let us lead down the next dance." Sophia whispered Mrs. Oliver to know her opinion; she gave her consent,

consent, and Fanny made no objection; for so great was the affection of these sisters, that each consulted the other on the most trifling affairs, and one opinion seemed to rule both. Fleming then led Sophia up, the music began, and they went down with the dance to the surprize of the astonished company; and not much less to Sophia, who found her partner was possessed of every graceful movement. When they came to the bottom, according to the country fashion of saluting his partner, he bowed, and taking her hand, he led her aside; then snatching her to his breast, and tenderly saluting her, "Lovely

ly maid," said he, "tell me where we shall meet again. If you have a heart at your disposal, and will exchange with me, we will spend our nights in pleasure, and our days in ease. There is a little farm to be disposed of, which with a larger track of land I have already in possession, will decently support us; and we will never disagree, without it is which shall love the other most."

This open and honest offer of the swain quite disconcerted Sophia; however she had resolved, at first setting out, to take all in good part; therefore, supposing it the country fashion of making

love, she smiling said, It was a hasty declaration to one he had never seen before; besides, he was proposing great undertakings, but from whence must come the means? He was quite transported to find she so far yielded as to listen to his suit; assured her he should be able to do that and more, for his father, though a farmer, would do any thing for him, and would consent to his marriage with any one he liked. Then kissing her again, he said, "Silence gives consent, and you are mine for ever."

Had

Had any of Sophia's equals attempted to treat her with half that freedom, she would have awed them with a frown; but here all was fair. So, promising to meet in the close behind that barn on the following evening, they returned to the company. They found Mrs. Oliver and Fanny regaling themselves with cakes and ale, accompanied by Polly, her father, and her two brothers. All restraint being worn off, young Fleming took his seat by the side of his nymph, and being invited to partake of their fare, they readily agreed; and surely, there never were a happier pair than Sophia and Cymon.

After about an hour's social conversation, Mrs. Oliver, Fanny and Sophia, arose to go home. They were much pressed to stay longer, but begging to be excused, their entertainers insisted upon going with them part of the way, at least. Passing again through the fair, Mrs. Oliver, Fanny and Sophia, each of them bought a very handsome fairing, and presented them to Polly. They were so far above her expectations, that she was quite in raptures with them, and her father was almost endless in his acknowledgments of the favour shewn to his poor girl, as he called her. Fleming told Sophia, he thought she was unkind
to

to forget him; so the next stall they came to, she bought him a very handsome silk handkerchief, which, she told him, would keep him from the cold. He would fain have made her a return; but she had before acquainted him, that she would not accept of any thing more, if he purchased the whole fair. Then renewing their promises of meeting again, and taking fresh leave, they joined the rest of the company, till they all separated. When they got home, they asked Sophia how she liked the fair, and the dancing? "I like it much, for once," said she, "but I would not go again." Mrs. Oliver and Fanny were both of the same

opinion, and they observed to her how well her partner danced; but as Sophia pretended not to have noticed it, the subject was dropped.

That night Mrs. Oliver was obliged to stay with them; and when Fanny and Sophia retired to rest, the latter informed her sister of all that had passed between Cymon and herself. "Well," said Fanny, "and will you meet him?" "Yes, if you have no material objection, I will," replied Sophia. Fanny then cautioned her how she engaged herself or her affections, without farther knowledge of Cymon; as she

she dared to say, she could never condescend to be a farmer's wife.

"I do not know that," said Sophia, "I could wish he was a gentleman; but he may improve of the awkward country expressions, and then he would do very well. You know, sister," continued she, "we have lost our fortunes, and what gentlemen would marry us; for let them love us as they will, they all love money too." Fanny was sensible the remark was very true, yet could not be easy that her sister should give her company on such a footing, without advice, as she had done.

Mrs. Oliver took leave the next day, and in the evening Sophia kept her appointment. Young Fleming was true to his time; and after trying whether a pleasant meadow, soft music, and lively conversation had any charms for Sophia, he would fain have attended her home. This she absolutely forbid, and left him, after promising to consult her friends, and to meet him again.

Upon returning to her sister, Sophia again told her all that had passed. At last, "what shall I do," said she, "he will take the farm immediately,—I really like him too well to refuse him.—I think

think had he Sir Thomas's fortune, I should be but too happy; —but Cymon without a fortune, is far before Sir Thomas with one, for the reasons I have before given." Fanny, who was too sensible by her own experience, of Sophia's situation, did not object, but said, she had better wait her brother's arrival, as he was so soon expected; and she did not doubt, but he would be agreeable to any thing that he would contribute to her happiness. Sophia agreed to that, and said she would tell young Fleming so.

The lovers continued frequently to meet, but Sophia always in the

same character in which she at first appeared ; till, at last, she became quite reconciled to the change, and every day more earnest in her wishes for her brother's arrival. When pressed by Cymon for leave to see her home, she strongly forbade him, till the consent of her only friend should be had ; at the same time declaring, she had no expectation from him. He replied, that he had sufficient for their support, but as he had nothing more to settle on her than his affections, she had better let him take the farm, publish the banns, and be married at once. That if she wanted to purchase any thing, he would give her what money she thought necessary,

necessary, so that she need not wait the arrival of her friend upon that account. She thanked him for his offer, but told him she wanted for nothing at present. As they never met without his giving her ribbands, fans, gloves, and such like country presents, which caused much diversion to Fanny and her; yet the open, frank, and generous disposition that accompanies these gifts, would Sophia say, renders them of more worth than the most costly jewels from gentlemen who speak by rote the same round of compliments to every lady they meet.

The serenity of the weather, the warbling of the birds, and the bleating of the sheep, induced Mrs. Williams to accompany them one evening to a seat on a bank on the other side of the meadow. "How delightful," said Sophia, "is this situation! Well, I shall certainly like to live in a farmhouse." "I fear, my dear," said Fanny, "you would soon be tired of it: you would want to turn the dairy into a servants hall; other parts into a kitchen, &c. the bed-rooms into drawing-rooms; to take the horses from the plow to put into your carriages, and the produce of the farm to entertain your company: and when
all

all has been thus metamorphosed, unless you can change the opinion of the master, constant unhappiness must attend you both."

"How strange you talk," replied Sophia, "Do you think society can be enjoyed by none but you? Is there not another Villars in merit to be found? Or did he, when he left England, carry every virtue with him? No, my dear, in the want of truth, he wanted every other valuable qualification; and I could wish you to forget him, or if you cannot do that, to think of him as he is, not worth your love."

Fanny

Fanny sat silent all this while, but when Sophia stopped, a flood of tears relieved her almost broken heart, and she, sobbing, cried, "Unkind Sophia, I too plainly perceive that happiness is not for me; my brother's arrival will give me pleasure, but it cannot make me happy. You, and all around me have pleasures yet in store, but do not think I envy your approaching joy: no, but your reflecting on Horatio, on me, and past occurrences, that gives me pain; indeed it is too much from you." Sophia little imagined what she was saying would so closely touch her sister, and did all in her power to soothe her drooping

drooping spirits, but in vain. Fanny had so long suppressed her sorrow, it now came like a torrent on her, and from tears alone she found relief.

Mrs. Williams begged of her not to suffer herself to be overwhelmed with the thoughts of one, whom she had so little probability of ever being happy with. "Men settle for themselves in life," said she, "and how very seldom do they keep, or rather, how very frequently do they break their vows, however binding! And your's, my dear," continued she, "were made at an age, when most would have forgotten them; neither

neither indeed were they binding, as neither of you were at your own disposal: therefore think no more about him, but endeavour to be happy." The more they said, the more unhappy Fanny seemed to be, till at length she begged them to be silent, saying, She should not long trouble them, or think of him.

While they were talking, a chaise and four with two postillions, and two footmen on horseback, drove swiftly along the road, of which they had a full view. "Look, look," said Sophia, "by the gay appearance here comes some nobleman; let us go and see."

see if it is us he is coming to." Your mirth and your reflections come equally unseasonably," replied Fanny; "yet I am glad to find you have not quite forgot the charms of figure." Sophia was silent. Presently the maid came running and whispered Mrs. Williams, who instantly arose. "Ladies," said she, "I am sent for in haste; and had not you better come home, than stay here alone?" They answered, they would follow, which accordingly they did, though but slowly. As they went, they enquired of the servant the cause of Mrs. Williams's haste; who answered, She did not know; but that one
in

in the neighbourhood had sent for her.

They went and sat down in the garden, and presently Mrs. Williams came running with all the speed she could. "Dry up your tears, my dear Miss Fanny," said she, "I don't know but I may be your best physician yet; and find a balm to heal those wounds so near your heart." "Nothing, nothing, madam," replied Fanny, "can ever efface from my memory the cause: if indeed you can divest me of thought, then indeed it may be effected: but death only can ease me of my smart, and that, I dare to say, you:

you would not be the willing messenger of." "Oh, no, my dear," said she, "I love you too well, willingly to lose you: but come in, I want to speak to you."

"Cannot we talk here," said Fanny, "it is cool and pleasant."

"Well, be it so," replied Mrs. Williams; "and now, my dear, who of all the world would you wish to hear from?" "From one,"

replied Fanny, "I never, never shall." "A gentleman," said

Mrs. Williams, "is just arrived—Don't be over-joyed," (seeing her countenance change) "and

has brought word that Mr. Villars is alive, is well, and single."

"Oh! could I see the messenger!"

ger!" exclaimed Fanny. "When and where did you hear it?"

"Just now," replied Mrs. Williams. "Oh, do let me see him,"

said she, "I am sure then he still is mine." So saying, up she

started, while Sophia, looking down a long walk which nearly

faced them, saw a gentleman approaching, and said, "Who is

coming here?" Fanny, casting her eyes down the walk, immediately

threw away a book she had just been reading, and flew, if

ever wings were lent to mortals, down to meet him, while Sophia

and Mrs. Williams stood astonished. She was met with equal

speed, and each in open arms clasping

clasping the other, down they sunk together.

Mrs. Williams and Sophia for some time endeavoured to separate them, but in vain; till a little recovering, as if one breath and one life animated both bodies, they looked stedfastly at each other; and as soon as they could speak, "Oh, my Fanny!" "Oh, my Horatio!" was all they could say. Tears now of joy, relieved his Fanny, and she wept till she could weep no more. He kissed the tears from her cheeks, and begged her to compose herself, for till he could call her his, he never would leave her more.

They

They all then went into the house, and after an apology to Mrs. Williams and Sophia for his abrupt behaviour, Mr. Villars respectfully saluted them both; and then sitting down by Fanny, "Now, my dear," said he, "every moment will be an age to me, till I can call you mine. I will send for a special licence, there is a clergyman, no doubt, in this neighbourhood, and this night we will be married." Fanny paused. "I think," said she, blushing, "as your presence only was what I wished for, we had better stay a little. The hurry and surprize has so overcome me——" "Well," said he, interrupting

interrupting her, "we will put it off till to-morrow; not one moment longer; to-night *you* shall govern, to-morrow must be *mine*."

The cloth being laid for supper, "I cannot tell what you will do with such an interloper to-night, madam," said he to Mrs. Williams. "Oh, sir," returned she, "you shall sleep in my bed; the ladies and I can sleep together." "Oh, no," said he, "Miss Bemont and I will sit up, we can rest to-morrow night together without any inconvenience to you."—But she insisted it should be as she had proposed. A piece of
I cold

cold meat and a fallad being all the provision they had, was soon put on the table.

Mr. Villars begging leave to step out for a few minutes, to give some necessary directions, Sophia, who had not had an opportunity to speak one word, then congratulated her sister on her unexpected good fortune. Yet she could scarcely talk of any thing else but his elegant address, his charming eyes, his lovely hair, his handsome teeth, his delightful smile. "But what will you do," said she at last, "about your fortune?" "Nothing at all," said Fanny, "it has never given me a moment's

moment's thought; I am sure it has not him; not but I will tell him of our misfortune before we are united."

In less than half an hour Mr. Villars returned. As soon as he came in, he said, he had taken the liberty to order the supper provided for him where he put up, to be brought there, as he thought they would not go to the inn; and at those houses, said he, they always expect that something should be ordered. A servant, in the same livery they had seen pass along, came in, followed by a waiter; and the table was soon covered with an elegant refresh-

ment, and wines of every sort; and pleasure, mirth and lively chat, filled up the passing time.

When the servant had removed the things, and they were quite alone, "Well, my dear young lady," said he to Sophia, "has no one happy man, got possession of your heart? or, are you so victorious as to slay all before you, and sustain no loss yourself?" Sophia, blushing, replied, "Indeed, sir, we have both sustained too great a loss, for any one to think it worth their while to cast one glance this way, unless it be for curiosity; though, had I my sister's merit, I should not fear a conquest

conquest worth acceptance."—
 Fanny bowed. "My lovely girl,"
 said Mr. Villars, "your merit is
 sufficient to conquer and to keep
 any who know your worth. As
 to your loss, it is trifling; I heard
 of it before I came; and before
 you should have one moment's
 pain for that, I will replace it all
 again, if my Fanny will give con-
 sent, for I have now nothing of
 my own." "You are too oblig-
 ing, sir," said Fanny, "is it not
 enough to accept one sister, with-
 out taking any trouble about the
 other?" "Accept, do you call
 it, madam," said he, "if Miss
 Bemont accepts of me, I shall
 think all the months and years

of absence I have endured, richly overpaid." "We will not dispute her worth," replied Sophia, "lest, jealous of each other, we should disagree; and if I should send you a challenge, you must certainly accept it, and then instead of a comedy, you know, it might prove tragical." They laughed at her pleasant turn, and proposed to go to rest, and settle fortunes another day.

Although the night was far spent before they broke up, it did not prevent their rising early the next morning, when Mr. Villars met his Fanny in the garden, blooming as the native inhabitants

tants of the place. After the morning salutation, he pressed Fanny's consent to be married that day, urging that delay was quite unnecessary. She said, she should choose to go to church; she thought it a ceremony so solemn, it required a sacred place for the performance. And the next day but one being Thursday, a favourite day of her's, she should be glad if he would so far indulge her. Besides, she had a friend or two whom she wished to be present, and some little preparation to make; and could they be accomplished, it would be more agreeable to her. With reluctance he complied; but finding

she was so desirous of this little delay, he could not well refuse. The material point being settled, they returned to the company.

At breakfast Fanny told Mrs. Williams her design, who highly commended her prudence. "And suppose," said the latter, "you were to prepare to day what you want for the occasion?" "I shall make no preparation," answered Fanny, "what I have I shall wear. My sister shall go to London, and have whatever she may choose, it can be instantly made up." Sophia thanked her sister, and told her she should not have wanted any new dress,

dress, but from the respect she wished to shew her on so joyful an occasion." " Well," said Mr. Villars, " I have a post-chaise at your service, ladies, and I will attend you on horseback." This being agreed, the carriage was ordered, and they set out immediately after breakfast; Mr. Villars first giving Fanny his purse, and desiring that what more she wanted, she would ask for.

As they were going along, " Little did I think," said Sophia, " that this elegant chaise would convey me to London, when it passed along yesterday." " Nor I," said Fanny; and indeed of so

little consequence is it to me, that I have never yet enquired by what means he has become possessed of his present riches.—But pray tell me, how do you intend to proceed with Cymon? It is time to think of your affairs a little; do you like him still, or are you changed again?” “To be frank with you, sister,” replied Sophia, “I wish I did not like him so well; for I think I never shall be happy with any other. Yet I could wish that his sphere of life had been cast rather higher; not that I think the worse of him for that, but—

“You think,” interrupted Fanny, “your acquaintance will, but never mind that; I am sure, did
 still your

your love carry you half the length that mine did, you would leap over all those trifles, and accept of him at once." "What! whether my brother——" "Oh yes," said Fanny: "Had my Villars came back without a shilling, I had given him the same reception; for riches will not purchase love or happiness. A brown crust and water with him I love, would to me, be much preferable to all the wealth of the Indies, with one who was indifferent to me. As to my brother, I respect and value him; I am sure we are bound to him by a double tie, as when only engaged by friendship, he was ever ready to make us happy,

and how much more now? What I observed before, respecting Cymon, was only to know who were his friends, that you might not be deceived." Sophia thought her sister's advice such as she should be directed by, and assured her, that she would take no step without her approbation; yet she thought she should be happy if she had her consent. "Well," replied Fanny, "as soon as my affairs are settled, if you approve it, Mr. Villars shall give Mr. Fleming a meeting, and every thing shall be accommodated to your wishes; but till then you may continue your disguise, if you choose it, but

but never marry under false appearances."

By this time they arrived in town, and having purchased every thing they wanted, they called on Mrs. Oliver, who was overjoyed to see them.—Mr. Oliver was at home, and received them very politely; they had never seen him before, but he even exceeded Mrs. Oliver's account of him. Mr. Villars was gone about some other business, and was to meet them at Mr. Semour's, in their way home. Mrs. Oliver congratulated Fanny on the recovery of her spirits, and commended her resolution, which she hoped would

continue. Fanny smiled, and blushing replied, the compliment was unmerited, for she feared, with all her fortitude, she should have sunk under the malady, had not the remedy been found that only suited her complaint.

"What," said Mrs. Oliver, "have you then heard from the young gentleman?" "Yes, madam," eagerly replied the lively Sophia, "and she has seen him too; and we have called this morning to ask your presence on Thursday next, at the wedding. We shall have no other company but you, Mr. Oliver, and our own family." Mr. Oliver joined his lady in congratulating Fanny on the joyful occurrence, and applauding

applauding the constancy of both, and then promised to attend them.

As Mr. and Mrs. Oliver had intimated a wish of knowing when and how Mr. Villars and Fanny first met, the latter gave them an account of the beginning and progress of their passion for each other, which they could not hear without a silent tear of joy, at the affecting scenes, and happy conclusion. When she had finished, Mr. Oliver enquired who was to stand as father at the wedding? Sophia smilingly replied, She believed the clerk, as no other was provided. Mr. Oliver then offered

his service in that light, which Fanny thankfully accepted.

They then respectfully took their leave, as having many things to do in a short time. They next called on Mrs. Semour, whom they had not seen since the difference between Mrs. Montague and Fanny. As it was in her house Fanny first saw Mr. Villars, she had always retained a great friendship for that family. She was there told, that Mr. Montague had not failed to clear up every seeming disregard in Fanny by her absence, and had also so fully condemned himself and excused her, that Mrs. Montague looked on herself as so much

much the aggressor, as to declare she was ashamed, although she wished to see her. Fanny left a message calculated to dispel every cloud of that sort in Mrs. Montague, with a promise of soon calling again.

They had left the carriage at some little distance from Mr. Seymour's, as they did not design to take any notice of Mr. Villars's arrival there, being certain, if he should come in, unthought of, they would not know him; which accordingly was the case, when he called just as they were taking leave. They then returned to Mrs. Williams's, where Fanny gave an account

count of her visits, and also of Mr. Oliver's offer; which was very agreeable to Mr. Villars.

That afternoon was, in great part, taken up by a recital of all Fanny's and Sophia's adventures, since Mr. Villars's departure; which raised the various emotions of joy and grief alternately to him, as their story varied. At the conclusion of it, he folded Fanny in his arms. "Your unexampled pattern," said he, "of prudence, love and virtue, shall be rewarded with my fortune, love, nay life itself, if requisite; and all will be too little, to repay only
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one moment of that pain I have been the cause of."

The next day Fanny said, "This day, you know, sir, is to be mine." "Yes," replied Villars, "and to-morrow, the next, and every day you rise." "Well," replied she, "but this I am to manage; and I should like to have as many chaplets of flowers, gloves and favours provided, as would supply all the young women in the village that would accept of them; also gloves and favours for the young men; and cakes and ale for the old folks; to be given to-morrow, at the inn where your servants put up."

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"It shall be done," said he, "and I will add some beef, both boiled and roasted, to make it true English cheer."—A servant was accordingly dispatched with the necessary orders to provide them.

In the afternoon, Fanny called upon Mr. Villars for an account of the several changes he had passed through during his absence; "for," said she, "there must something very singular have happened after I heard from you, to bring about your affairs in so prosperous a way, and in so short a time." "As there is nothing either very pleasant or entertaining," replied he, "in the recital,
I shall

I shall endeavour to relate them in as few words as possible; as by my behaviour at the time we failed, and by my conduct since, you may know what I suffered in parting.

" We were stationed at Antigua, from whence I wrote to you. A planter of considerable fortune who resided there, and whose nephew was my chief companion, was pleased to entertain a high opinion of me, and I was frequently admitted to his table. He had an only daughter, whom he was fond of to excess. Through the frequency of my being there, and the old gentleman's partiality
for

for me, it was soon whispered about that I was his intended son-in-law: It reached his ear; but not to his satisfaction; for though he was fond of his daughter, he was not less so of his riches; and one of his chiefest pleasures was, in having amassed a greater sum of transitory wealth, than the rest of his neighbours: as upon that account, if his daughter was to be matched to her equal, he would scarcely have been found upon that island.

“ One day as I was sitting with him after dinner, Horatio, said he, how do you like our island? Not at all, sir, replied I, for I have

have scarcely enjoyed one day's health since I came on shore. What then, said he, would you wish to leave us? No, sir, not you, said I, I would not wish to leave you; but that is all the inducement I have to stay. What, said he again, have you no favourite lass on all our island; is there no one of sufficient beauty among us to induce your stay? No, sir, said I, excepting your daughter, I have conversed with very few. My daughter, replied he, has disoblged me; she has rejected the offers of a gentleman, who is her equal both in birth and fortune; and to tell you the truth plainly, I am informed it
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is through your advice. I am sorry, sir, replied I, that any one should so wrong me; but I will endeavour to satisfy your doubts. I then informed him of my engagements and unalterable love to you. When I had done, he took me in his arms, and tenderly caressed me for my open generous declaration; saying, he feared his daughter would suffer by my absence; else if I wished to give up my station there, he could assist me in it, and would reward my unexampled conduct. I thanked him for his offer, in a manner that testified the sense I had of his favours.

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“ As he had invited me to come again the next day, I accordingly went. As soon as we were seated, Horatio, said he, my girl is certainly in love, and you are the deserving object of her regard. I would rather she would have accepted the offer I mentioned to you, but she will not. Your candid behaviour has won my soul as well as her; and if you think your love will not, at home, meet with the reward it merits, I will consent to your marriage. I freely told him—No, not for all the riches of Antigua would I give up my Fanny. He again carested me; and said, it mattered not then how soon I went; and
that

that by application to the admiral, I might either exchange my station, or return to England. I rejoiced at my good fortune, and by his assistance soon received a permission to return. It was from this circumstance, I have reason to believe, the report of my marriage arose.

“There being at that time no shipping there bound to England, by his advice I took my passage in a Guinea ship going to Virginia, which then lay there. At parting he presented me with a bill of the value of 100 l. sterling, and this watch, and made me promise to let him hear from

from me when I reached England. He had sent his daughter from home before we parted. We had a quick and very pleasant passage to Virginia, and among the passengers was a French gentleman, who was going to an eminent planter there, to learn his son the languages, and other polite accomplishments.

“ After our arrival, by this gentleman’s desire I called on him. His pupil so strongly joined him in requesting me to stay dinner, that it was not possible for me to refuse. His father, a gentleman possessed of large plantations, seemed much pleased with his

son's new acquaintance, and, as while I waited for a ship I had no settlement, begged me to make that my home. This invitation I accepted, and music, translating, fencing, or shooting filled up the main of our time, and Master Arnold, that was his name, often wished I never would go back.

“ A ship at length came in bound for England, and that very day Master Arnold complained that he was not well; all imaginable help was immediately procured, but in vain; a fever came on, it proved a malignant one, and notwithstanding all possible care, he died in
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less than a fortnight. Contrary to all advice, I attended him day and night, as all the time he would take no medicines but from my hand. His father was like one distracted when he knew his danger; and begged me not, though at the same time he wished it, to stay with him; but I told him that I would, at the hazard of my life, continue my attendance. The night in which he died, he called for his father, and desired him to give me all his things, and conjured him to shew his love to him by his tender care of me; and the old gentleman promised as well as he was able, to fulfil his desire.

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“The very next day I sickened of the same fever. Mr. Arnold had no less care taken of me, than of his own son, yet for many days my life was not expected. I at last got the better of the disorder, and when I began to sit up, Mr. Arnold never quitted me, and we spent whole days together. After I was quite recovered, he one day called me to him, when looking stedfastly upon me, tears filled his eyes. Horatio, said he, here are my Tommy’s keys, you know his room, and likely the contents, better than I do, for I have never been into it since — there he stopped. What can I do with them,

them, fir? said I, the contents I neither wish to know, nor can accept. A something to keep for his sake before I go, is all I desire. He shook his head; pressed the keys into my hand, and left me.

“ Three days after another ship was ready to sail. I went into Mr. Arnold’s room. Sir, said I, there is a ship now ready to sail for England, had I not better take my passage in her? He paused a while—No, my child, said he,—unless you had rather go, you need not seek any other home; you have richly deserved all I can do for you. You

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greatly

greatly over-rate my little services, sir, said I, I could like to stay a time to see you better, but how to act contrary to the admiral's consent I cannot tell. Oh, leave that to me, said he. I then stayed till he was so well recovered as to transact his business and talk of his son without being so much overwhelmed with grief. I had full possession of all his son's effects, which were costly and valuable.

“ At the expiration of six months I wrote to you, which letter you never had. In the mean time Mr. Arnold had procured my full discharge, and I then became

came as natural to him as his own son. I was always with him, and he instructed me in the culture of his plantations, and employed me in his affairs, till I became quite useful to him.

“ When I had been with him a year, he gave me leave, seeing my anxiety, to come to England, on my promise to return to him; and every thing was settled for my voyage. But a dream, in which my safety was threatened, had such an effect on his spirits, that I saw it was not proper to attempt to leave him. I then wrote to you by a gentleman, who since told me, that all his endea-

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vours.

vours to find you were in vain. At this news I was almost distracted, fearing my long silence should abate your love, or cause you trouble; and had certainly then broke through all engagements to come, had not Mr. Arnold been taken dangerously ill.

“The very first day his disorder was pronounced fatal. On the second, as I was sitting by his bed-side, he bid me fetch a little iron box; I did so. Open it, said he, there is my will, and some other things of value, take care of them. You will find, if I die, they will be serviceable to you. Mr. Sheppard (who was his overseer)

feer) is a very careful honest man, and I dare say will do as well for you, as he has done for me. I knelt down and took his hand, which I bathed with my tears, for I could not speak. He bid me rise, and kissed me. In short, not to detain you with so affecting an occurrence, (for the ladies could not hear it without tears) on the fourth day he died.

“ After he was interred, which was done with great grandeur, his will was produced, and, excepting a few inconsiderable legacies, I was left in possession of his whole fortune, which is more than sufficient to procure us all

the elegancies of life; but which I fet little store by, only as it gives me an opportunity, by laying it at your feet, to shew in some measure my regard for your virtues. After waiting on such of Mr. Arnold's acquaintance as I thought most capable of advising me, I left Mr. Sheppard in care of my business, and two of the oldest servants in the house, and without delay set out in search of that heart I had left behind me. When I came on shore, I never stopped my enquiries, till here (clasping Fanny in his arms) I found the dear possessor of it."

When

When Mr. Villars had finished his narrative, of which Fanny had been an attentive, but not unagitated auditor, the ladies thanked him for the trouble he had taken ; and then, as the evening was drawing on, separated to make their respective preparations for the next day.

In the morning Mr. and Mrs. Oliver came, dressed suitably to the occasion, and that respect they wished to shew to the sister of their darling child ; for Mrs. Oliver had, after Fanny left them, acquainted Mr. Oliver with their relation and every other circumstance of their story (omitting

only her own attachment to Mr. Bemont) which so far from displeasing, gave him the greatest pleasure. Mrs. Williams and Sophia met them both dressed, agreeable to their situation and age. When the breakfast was ready, Mr. Villars led in the bride, blushing like Aurora; who was affectionately saluted by the company.

After the first salutations were over, Mr. Villars went up to Mr. Oliver, and offering his hand, said, "How happy am I that Mr. and Mrs. Oliver should be the friends of my Fanny! Do not you remember Mr. Arnold?"—They were struck with surprize. "I had

had cause to know his eldest son," said Mrs. Oliver; "he saved me and my Charles in our voyage to Ireland." "I have heard of it, madam," said Mr. Villars; "he was of a roving disposition, and is since dead; young Thomas also is no more. But I will tell you the rest another time, as I fear we shall keep the clergyman in waiting."

As soon as breakfast was over, they set off for church, from whence they returned, attended by the praises of all the little village. Sophia was the whole time in a thousand fears, lest her young Cymon should have been among
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the gaping multitude, and so know her before she chose to discover herself. The day and evening were spent with joy and mirth, to all who thought proper to partake of their bounty, and with calm pleasure and true felicity to themselves. Mr. and Mrs. Oliver stayed till the next day, and then took leave.

Having passed about a month in the enjoyment of each other, Mr. Villars began to think of his affairs abroad, and of the necessity there was of his presence there. Mrs. Villars had received so disagreeable an account of Virginia from Mrs. Oliver, that she had

no inclination to visit that place from any motives of pleasure; but as she must either undertake the voyage, or again suffer the absence of Mr. Villars, which had already been so fatal to her peace, her love prompted her to agree to accompany him. Yet as the summer was far advanced, she desired to put off the voyage till the following spring; which Mr. Villars agreeing to, they determined to pass the remaining part of the summer where they then were; and when the winter drew on, to take a furnished house in London, to reside in till their departure.

Mrs.

Mrs. Villars now thought of her engagement to her sister, and as her happiness was strictly connected with her own, enquired of her, what she thought lay in her power that might contribute to it. Sophia answered she could hardly tell; "I am," said she, "still in the same situation; I cannot quite get the better of my lover's station in life, nor can I think of totally giving him up. He is both agreeable and sensible; and I think I should be happy with him." "Suppose," said Mrs. Villars, "you had your fortune?" "Why then," said Sophia, "I would not hesitate a moment, for that would put it in my power to live separate from
from

from his farm, and he need only attend it as a matter of amusement; and then I think I should be very happy indeed." "Well then," said Mrs. Villars, "the next time you see him, propose a meeting between him and Mr. Villars; tell him Mr. Villars is your friend, and that you will be directed by him. This proposal was very agreeable to Sophia, and she engaged speedily to bring them together.

When Mr. Villars had heard the whole particulars of the ladies secret expedition, he could not help giving way to a little agreeable raillery upon Sophia's entanglement;

ment; but at the same time promised, that neither fortune or any thing else in his power, should be wanting, that could contribute to her happiness; withal observing, that he feared Cymon's situation in life would ill suit her more refined ideas: adding, that when he had seen him, he should be able to form a better judgment.

In a short time the lovers met, and Sophia proposed the meeting between Cymon and Mr. Villars; when he answered, He was ever ready to comply with every proposal; but that such long delays to bring him to the summit of his wishes, made him very unhappy.

happy. However, the place was fixed on, a very decent little house, resorted to only by a few of the country villagers; and, at the time appointed, Mr. Villars went there dressed genteely, but plain, that he might not appear to be much superior to his companion. Sophia and her sister walked out into the fields to pass away the time, till his return, which was in less than two hours. When Sophia saw him, she was filled with a mixture of impatience and confusion; but he met them smiling, and leading them to the side of a little rivulet, and seating them on a rising ground, he took his place between them.

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After a few sentences spent upon the pleasantness of their situation, addressing himself to Sophia, he said, " I should esteem myself very happy, my dear sister, to be able to serve you in every thing in my power, but the settling the present affair seems to be beyond it. Your new conquest is certainly a most surprizing person, for though his behaviour was strictly polite and obliging in every other respect, I could not get him to enter into any conversation with me either on his situation in life, his present prospects or his future intentions. He said, you had a friend abroad, by whose advice you told him

him you should be directed; from which declaration he hoped his person was not disagreeable, and every thing else, upon his arrival, he did not doubt would be settled according to your approbation. As I declined saying any more on the subject, when I found that was the case, we only talked of a few general things, and then took leave. For my part, I think there is something very singular in his conduct; he is certainly a very agreeable man, and I do not imagine any way deficient in understanding. But I believe the affair must remain as it is, till Mr. Oliver's arrival."

Sophia

Sophia thanked Mr. Villars for the trouble he had been at, and said, it was very indifferent to her, whether she ever saw Cymon again or not. That indeed might be the language of her lips, but was certainly very foreign to the sentiments of her heart; for the impression he had made there, was too strong to be easily effaced. However, she did not long remain in her state of anxiety, as Mrs. Oliver, in a very few days, sent them notice of her son's arrival, with his lady, and her sisters. This diffused a general joy throughout the family; they lost no time in attending them to welcome them
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on their arrival ; and the transports of felicity on both sides, on their happy meeting, exceeded all description.

Mr. Oliver received his sisters with the strongest marks of affection. And to find in the person of Mr. Villars, that of the only youth he had ever entertained any particular attachment to in Virginia, (which had been founded both in his personal merit, and the public esteem of all his acquaintance) tended greatly to complete the satisfaction he felt on his sister's union with him. Their emotions of joy being a little subsided, and settled into a
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serene and mutual affection, Mr. Villars informed them of his succeeding to Mr. Arnold's fortune; whose eldest son having been the instrument of saving the lives of Mrs. Oliver and young Mr. Oliver, had naturally occasioned an intimacy between the two families.

After some days being together, Mr. Villars told them of his intention to spend a few months in England, then to return to Virginia, and after disposing of all his effects there; by the end of the following summer, to settle in or near London. Mr. and Mrs. Oliver finding this
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plan quite agreeable to their own inclination, recommended it to their son; who readily consenting to their desire of his constantly residing in England, determined to go over with Mr. Villars, as by that means, they would both be certain of an agreeable companion, while transacting their business, as well as on their return.

Sophia was all this while labouring under a state of suspense; her attachment to Cymon, being no less than that of her sister to Villars. But at present, all the parties seemed too much absorbed in their own happiness, to

bestow a thought upon her disagreeable situation. When that was a little subsided, she took an opportunity in a pleasant manner to railly them on self-happiness. Mr. Villars immediately took the hint, and calling Mr. Oliver aside, informed him of the affair between Sophia and Cymon. Mr. Oliver severely reflected upon himself for his want of proper respect for his sister, by not more minutely enquiring into her present situation. Not but she had seemed to join so sincerely in congratulating their happiness, and enjoying every satisfaction consequent upon it, that no one could have

have supposed she had had any wish of her own unaccomplished.

Mr. Oliver, much concerned at his own neglect, took the first opportunity he could procure, to enquire of Sophia in the tenderest manner, if no one had yet been happy enough to gain a share of her esteem; or if she was not inclined to follow the example of her sister, by entering into the married state? She purposely changed the topick, and started a conversation upon a very different subject. Perceiving it, he made her a reserved bow, and was going away; but she hastily caught hold of him, and at the

same time blushing, promised if he would not be offended at her choice, or was not in too much haste to hear her out, she would tell him. He bowed his assent, and she proceeded to give him a particular account of her first meeting and subsequent conversations with Cymon.

Mr. Oliver said, he thought their first meeting was rather too romantic for happiness; but as her fortune would far exceed his expectation, if he had that affection for her he professed, and could from the young country farmer commence esquire, they might pass their time pleasantly enough.

“ But

“ But my lovely Sophia,” said he, “ must not expect from her Cymon what is not his to give; the praises due to those unparalleled graces that attend her every motion and every look. But what will Sir Thomas say,” continued he, “ when he finds the amiable Sophia Bemont has given up title, fortune, and splendid equipage, the drawing-room, and every other enjoyment dependent upon them, to be a plain home-spun country farmer’s wife, or at best to be the esquire’s lady ?”

“ Well,” replied Sophia, “ you and my sister, sir, have both had your choice, and are happy. I do

not wish to disgrace you. We will endeavour to make our corn and our hay, our butter and eggs pay our rent, we must live on pigs and poultry; and as elegant dress will not be in character, it will be the less expensive; and if you wish to avoid us, Berkshire must not be in your road." "Oh then you are determined I find," said he; "what need then of any previous meeting with me? What can I say, but that you are willing, if he is ready?" "No, sir," said Sophia, "I am not quite so forward neither; I can stay, or let it entirely alone; but if prudence forbids my acceptance of
this

this offer, I am not obliged to accept another."

"Well, my dear," said Mr. Oliver, "you seem displeased; do not be offended; my Sophia shall never have cause to reproach her brother or her sister with want of affection; nor shall Sophia or any one she wishes to espouse, want for any thing that can contribute to their happiness, and is within our power. I am certain I can answer for Horatio, as well as for myself; and the next time you meet, you may tell the young 'squire that I am ready to attend him—the time and place at his own appointment." So-

phia thanked her brother for his obliging and condescending offer, and promised to let him know as soon as she had seen Cymon.

It was not long before Sophia had an opportunity to fulfil her promise, for she met Cymon the next day; who did not fail, in gentle terms, to complain of her long absence. Nor was Sophia backward to tell him the cause, and that her long expected friend was arrived; adding, that if he meant to fulfil his engagements with her, he might now have an opportunity to meet that friend, by whose advice alone she should be determined.—Cymon paused—

“ If

“ If you have the least objection,” resumed Sophia, “ do not put yourself to any illconvenience, nor hesitate to comply with any proposal from me; say but the word, I am ready to disengage you from every promise made to me—it will be equally agreeable.” “ Too hasty, nymph,” replied Cymon, “ why should you judge so severely? If I was silent, it proceeded from another cause; left in meeting with your friend, I should lose my ever-adorable Sophia: but if you are really as indifferent as you pretend, believe me, haughty maid, I should meet your friend with as much indifference as you could part from

me: for if I doated on you ten times more than I do, which is not possible, and was sure to linger out a life of pain and hopeless sighs, I would sooner suffer that, than accept a princess if she preferred another, or had the least indifference to me."

Sophia, quite abashed, knew not what to answer. A favourable reply after such a declaration, she thought would be too submissive; nor could she blame, but applaud a spirit, so much like her own. While she was considering what answer she should make, Mr. Oliver appeared at a distance, entering the meadow by chance for
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an evening walk : the sight of him roused her from her pensive situation, and on perceiving her embarrassment, Cymon caught her hand, and pressing it to his lips — “ May I hope, too cruel maid,” said he, “ you only mean to try me? If that is your friend, as I suppose it is, say but the word, and the die is cast. I will either haste to meet him if you consent to be mine; or say, you do not, cannot like me, and I will instantly remove the object from you, which if you cannot love, you sure must hate.” So saying, he stopped a moment, but meeting no denial, he pressed her to his breast with an ardour that

almost deprived her of breath.

"I will go," continued he,

"this moment; stop but a short time, short it will seem to you, though long to me, till I return to my angel, to part no more."

He then again clasped her in his arms, and when he quitted her, was over the field before Mr. Oliver had gained ten steps, or she could speak one word to prevent him.

Sophia stood like one motionless, revolving in her mind how this would end. She could not imagine by what extraordinary impulse he could guess Mr. Oliver to be her friend, when so many

many others had passed along that side of the field unnoticed by him; or how he could even entertain a thought that a gentleman, of his appearance, should be the friend of a country girl. "Surely," said she, "I am not discovered in my disguise! if so, I am, or may be, by my fond conceit of rural pleasures, betrayed into utter ruin."

While she continued ruminating on these strange events, she forgot to observe the manner of Mr. Oliver's and Cymon's meeting, or which way they went. She had walked on to the bottom of the field, at the end of which was a path, which led homeward,

as she supposed; and judged it most prudent to pursue her course that way, as she had lost sight of them; and in any case, thought it best to resume her own dress before she was met by her brother. But how great her surprize, when she found, that instead of being nearer home, she was by the side of a little coppice, through which there seemed to be a strait path; but where it might lead to, or how far from home she then was, she could not tell. She had crossed a horse-road before she was sensible of her mistake, but returned again, intending to go back the same way as she had come; but perceiving two fields close together, so much alike, that in her confusion,

confusion, she could not tell which of them she had come over.

Having looked round her a considerable time, in hope of seeing some one who could inform her of the way, she at last espied a little boy carrying a pitcher nearly as big as himself. Sophia made up to him, and earnestly enquired, Where he had been to? "To yonder brook," said the boy, "for this water." "And where are you going with it?" said she. "To a house that path leads to," said the boy. She then enquired, Whose house it was. "It belongs," said the boy, "to the lady that lives in it." Notwithstanding the disagreeableness

of her situation, Sophia could not help smiling at the simplicity of the child's reply; but having asked him to shew her the way, she went with him.

Having walked together for some considerable time and finding she had still further to go, Sophia began to regret her having set out with so uncertain a guide, thinking it scarcely possible that any one should dwell in so reclusive a place. At last she saw a little boy very handsomely dressed, running towards them, but seeing Sophia, the child stopped: but the lad who was her conductor, calling out "Master Tommy, come hither;" he wanted no further invitation,

visitation, but pursued his journey till he joined them. Sophia caressed the little stranger, and he seemed no less pleased with her. She asked him where he lived. "There," said he, pointing, "but you shall go and see." Then taking hold of her hand, he urged her on as fast as he could, till they came in sight of a neat little house, so surrounded with trees, as to be quite unperceived till she was close up to it. "There I live," said the little man, and immediately began calling out "Mamma, mamma," as loud as he could; on which a very decent young woman came out, and curtsying to Sophia, enquired of her whom she wanted. On
this

this Sophia related to her the circumstances of her having lost her way, and how she came there; requesting a proper direction, and to be put into the way to her home. "We are but strangers here," replied the young woman, "but if you will please to sit down till my husband comes home, I am sure he will take care of you back again, if you will please to venture yourself with him."

Finding herself under so hospitable a roof, Sophia's fears began to abate; and after having promised to reward the good man for his trouble, she began to take a little survey of the place chance had conducted her to; which was perfectly

perfectly plain and neat, yet furnished with every thing that was useful. Her observations were soon interrupted by the return of her little companion, (for he had left her as soon as she entered the house) who told her his mamma would not come down while she was there. Upon this Sophia immediately arose, and desired she might be permitted to wait any where else, rather than prevent any one from coming there; but the young woman made an apology for the bluntness of the young gentleman, and begged her to stay where she was, alledging as a reason of his mamma's avoiding company, an ill state of health, which had so affected

affected her spirits, that she very seldom went out, and scarcely at all into any company; adding, that that need not disturb her, as the lady was never so happy as when alone.

The young woman had scarcely done speaking, when Master Tommy, who had gone up again to his mother, in his eagerness to return down, fell from the top of the stairs to the bottom. Every one ran to his assistance, but no one with greater speed than his mother, who caught him up in her arms, exclaiming that all happiness was over with her! her darling infant was surely killed! But in a short time he began

began to recover, which gave new joy to her heart, and the bloom that had quite forsaken her cheeks, began to return; and instead of that agitation of spirits which made her incapable of attending to any other object than her dear child, she resumed her wonted calm. She then addressed herself to Sophia, and thanked her in the strongest expressions of gratitude for her assistance to herself, and what was far dearer, her sweet babe. Sophia begged her to be silent on that head, and not to over-rate her little services so much beyond their merits, but permit her to do any thing that she should judge necessary for the little gentleman; while herself took

took something to prevent any bad effects that might attend the fright she had been thrown into.

Sophia's genteel easy address, together with her personal beauties, so much attracted the admiration of Maria, for so was this lady called, that she was quite charmed with her; and Sophia, on the other hand, was delighted with a lady who seemed all meekness and affability. As the child grew better, the conversation became more general, and Sophia began to recollect her situation; though at the same time that she wished to be restored to her friends, she would have been very glad to

to continue an acquaintance that had a prospect of giving mutual pleasure to all the parties. By this time the young man was come home, and being informed of Sophia's confinement for want of a guide, readily offered to attend her; and at the same time told her, the distance was not so great, as her fears at the time she came there had made her imagine. The ladies then parted, but not without a promise by Sophia, of renewing her visit to Maria the first opportunity.

Sophia returned home with all possible haste; and when she came in, the joy of her friends on her safety was almost without

out bounds; as Mr. Oliver had just before returned with the melancholy tidings, that he could hear nothing of her. Four servants were at that time out, and her Cymon was gone on horseback, all to seek for her; and Mr. Oliver had determined to take his horse and go forth on the same errand, just as she arrived.

Full of anxiety for the knowledge of what had passed in their conference, as soon as she had liberally rewarded her conductor, and thrown off her country habit, which she had worn all this time, Sophia desired to speak to her brother. As soon as they were together, Mr. Oliver expatiated

tiated largely on the good qualities of her conquest; and said, if she could submit a little to the rusticity of his address (which might be improved in time by her conversation) and condescend to his employ, which, with the addition of her fortune, need only be inspecting, he could not wish for her choice to be fixed on one more suitable to her temper, or who appeared, in his eyes, to be equally capable of rendering her happy. Sophia thanked him for his kindness, and was more than ever sensible of his superior discernment of another's qualifications; perhaps because he thought just as she liked he should. She then returned to the company

much happier than she left it ; as every thing seemed to bid fair for her being soon as happy as the rest of them.

In her hurry to return to the company, Sophia never thought of asking her brother when he was to see Cymon. The bell ringing, a note was brought to Mr. Oliver, which he, smiling, read ; saying, it came from Sophia's impatient lover. It contained information of his search after her being fruitless, and of his determination to return no more, till he could hear of, or see the only object that on earth could make him happy. Mr. Oliver wrote an answer, and sent it back by the same

same messenger; but although Sophia much wished to see the note which came from Cymon, yet as her brother did not offer to shew it her, or to read the answer he had sent, she would not take notice of either, but repressing her curiosity, retired to rest.

Sleep was, however, a stranger to her eyes that night, and she could not but think her brother's behaviour rather extraordinary, in holding a correspondence with a person he had seen but once, and who was in a sphere of life so very different from his own. Cymon's conduct in setting out towards him at first sight, and that almost before he knew whether he was

her friend or not, appeared to her equally mysterious. But however unpleasant she passed the night, Mr. Oliver, anxiously concerned for her happiness, came early in the morning, and tapped at her door, where she was ready to receive him. After an apology for his early visit, which she readily admitted, he took her by the hand, and seating himself by her, "I hope," said he, "my lovely Sophia will favour her brother with the confidence of a friend, as nothing can lay nearer his heart than her happiness." She assured him of the sense she had of the obligations she lay under to him; and that she should more than ever love him with the affection of a brother,

brother, and esteem him as her most sincere friend.

He then laid before her, in the most tender and mild terms, the situation she must expect to be in by her acceptance of Cymon; at the same time not to dissuade her from it, joined his kindest promises of contributing every thing in his power to add to her felicity; and did not fail to balance against Cymon's situation in life, the superior merit he appeared to possess over many who could boast of the greatest advantages of fortune. Sophia told him, she had thoroughly considered it in her mind, and though she could have wished,

for the satisfaction of her family, that there had not been so great a disparity in their situation, yet she could not but own, there was that frankness in his manner, joined to a natural sweetness and affability of temper, that to her was far preferable to the studied speeches and flattering compliments which the modern fine gentlemen indiscriminately make use of to every lady they meet, without either sincerity or truth. “And,” added she, “I must own I have never conversed with any one I can like so well as Cymon, provided the union will not be thought too great a disparagement to him, whom I shall ever think my best friend ;” bowing to her brother.

Mr.

Mr. Oliver replied, that as it was the first wish of his heart, to see her happy, so whoever she thought could most contribute to her felicity in the marriage state, he would, with the most cordial affection, receive as his brother. "Yet, my dear," added he, "I cannot but be concerned for a particular friend of mine, who, by your refusal of him, will, I fear, be quite wretched. I think he is not without a great deal of merit, and notwithstanding his former errors, I am assured, he has suffered sufficiently by his own reflections on them, to excite at least some degree of pity in your breast. And I flatter myself, however my Sophia may be prepossessed in

favour of another, she will not refuse to permit him to declare in person, the impression her superior charms have made on him: and though she cannot receive his addresses in a manner agreeable to his wishes, yet, being sensible what a true affection is, she will give her refusal in as mild terms as possible."

"Any friend of your's, my dear sir," said Sophia, "may command a particular distinction from me. But who is this friend who claims so great a share of your regard? I long to know, yet with reluctance listen." "Not to keep you in suspense, my dear," said Mr. Oliver, "It is Sir Thomas
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mas L——.” “I feared so,” replied Sophia, “Do you know I have often thought of him with a mixture of esteem and fear? I think I could never conquer the latter. Yet with him almost any other might be very happy.— Could the easy polite address of Sir Thomas, be joined to the open, mild, and generous disposition of Cymon, those pleasing qualifications in one person would make him a most accomplished gentleman indeed! however, pray let Sir Thomas know, that I am too far engaged to go back; and spare me the pain of a refusal.” “Then Cymon’s merit,” said Mr. Oliver, “exceeds that of Sir Thomas, with all his fortune.”

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"I do not wish to lessen Sir Thomas by comparing them together, but really Sir," said Sophia, "I have well considered it, and I think the other is the man who can render me most happy."

"Well, my dear sister," replied Mr. Oliver, "only permit Sir Thomas to have one interview, that he may have his refusal from your own lips: I have no other request: then I will consult Mr. Villars and our sister on the best method of informing your Cymon of your situation in life, and when you see him give him what encouragement you please, as we will conduct every thing with as much care and expedition as possible." "But when am I to see

Sir

Sir Thomas," said Sophia. "This evening," said he, "if agreeable." "Agreed," replied she, "I shall long for the hour, that it may be passed; but I must add a request of mine to your's, and that is, that you would be present." "With all my heart," said he. They then took leave of each other, both equally pleased with the interview.

The day passed away very pleasantly, the evening came, and with it the hour in which Sir Thomas was expected. Sophia withdrew into another room, Mr. Oliver followed to receive their guest, when Cymon entered, genteel but plainly dressed.

He stepped up to Sophia, "Heaven-born maid," said he, "whence comes it, that one error, one only error can never be forgiven; that I must be for ever banished the only object of earthly happiness, and the happy, thrice happy Cymon should be blessed, when princes might think themselves honoured to lay their crowns at your feet, and vow a lasting homage there?"

"What, or who are you, sir," replied Sophia, with a mixture of scorn and indignation, "that assumes the appearance of Cymon with the address of Sir Thomas? for I find you are no stranger to the characters of both. From
you,

you, however, I do not so much wonder to receive this treatment, but——” turning towards Mr. Oliver, who catching her half-extended hand, immediately said, “ I cannot stand a moment longer a witness to your surprize, or an object of your displeasure: Behold, in Cymon, your repenting Sir Thomas; and if you can be happy with the one, you cannot but make the other equally so: lay aside therefore all your scruples, and make him the happy man; as now you can have no objection to him, if you make use of that reason you are so distinguished for.”

Sophia stood in a pause, and half smiling, to see the alternate agita-

agitations of hope and fear, that had taken possession of his heart, and shewed themselves very visibly in his countenance, waiting only the least shadow of a turn from her to sink in despair, or break forth into rapture; when, with a grace peculiar to herself, she made a respectful curtsy to Mr. Oliver. “I have,” said she, “received so many proofs of your interest in my past happiness, that I cannot hesitate to be directed by you in the future; but permit me to withdraw for the present, and I will endeavour to bring myself into a proper disposition to receive your commands.” So saying, without giving either

of them time to reply, she precipitately left the room.

The emotions of Sir Thomas during Sophia's address to her brother, are easier to be imagined than described. After a pause, "I think," said Mr. Oliver, "I may congratulate you on a victory gained over a very favoured rival." Sir Thomas was too much overjoyed to be capable of even thanking Mr. Oliver for the part he had taken in the eclairsiffment, or of even soliciting him to compleat his happiness, by urging Sophia to hasten that happy moment that would put him in possession of what was to him

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more valuable than any other thing this world could afford.

After some stay Sophia returned, attended by her sister, who received Sir Thomas with great respect, and after rallying him a little on his contrivance, the rest of the company joining them, the conversation became general. Sir Thomas spent the evening with them with much pleasantry; but nothing particular passed between Sophia and him, excepting that now and then their eyes met, when his, with an half suppressed sigh, informed her, how much he wished for an opportunity to tell her, with Cymon's sincerity, how ardently he was devoted
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to her. When they separated for the night, he pressed her hand to his lips, and softly whispered, he should count the tedious moments till the next evening, when he should hope to see her again. She smiled consent, and they parted, both being pleased with their evening's entertainment.

When Sir Thomas was withdrawn, they all separately congratulated Sophia on her conquest, their pleasure being greatly heightened by the changing of Cymon into Sir Thomas; at the same time testifying their surprize, that Sophia should not have discovered him notwithstanding his disguise. She assured them that she never
had

had observed any thing in her Cymon, that could induce her to suppose him other than the character in which he appeared; nor could she think at the time that he knew her. Whether he had assumed the rustic appearance out of a frolic, as they had done, could only be determined by information from himself; but they all concluded, that as matters had gone so far, it would be most prudent, to avoid every occasion of delay, and conclude the ceremony as soon as possible. Upon this Sophia assured them she was not in haste to change her present condition, nor could she help regretting the loss of Cymon's sincere simplicity in the polite accom-

complished Sir Thomas : “ However,” added she, “ I must make the best I can of my swain, and submit myself to your disposal and his mercy. This occasioned a lively turn to the conversation, and after some little time they separated and retired to rest.

The next evening Sir Thomas was very punctual to his engagement, and his union with Sophia was finally agreed on. All present were very pressing with her for an early day ; and the following Thursday being fixed on by all the parties, in compliance with their request, Sophia consented then to give her hand to that Sir Thomas, who, under the assumed charac-

character of Cymon, was already in full possession of her heart.

Although a part of the intermediate time was necessarily taken up in some little preparations for the day, yet Sir Thomas was their constant visitor. He endeavoured, by avoiding those trifling compliments which the frothy race of modern fine gentlemen would have told her was due to her extraordinary merit, to converse with his Sophia on the most entertaining and improving subjects, in the plainest simplicity of language; nor was this a painful task, as at the same time as it was highly agreeable to her, it afforded him opportunities of shewing

shewing the sincerity of that passion he had professed for her, while under his assumed character.

As Sir Thomas had no settled place of residence, he very politely referred the choice of a situation to his beloved Sophia; and as they were conversing one afternoon upon that subject, "I think," said she, "I should be very happy could you purchase some small estate, with a plain decent house situated near some farms; where the villagers are honest and industrious people, and the vicar a sincerely pious and well-meaning man. Among such I could walk in safety, and entertain myself with pleasure;
with

with observing the growing families and increasing substance of my honest neighbours. Nor would it be a small part of my happiness, should any of them fall into trouble, by sickness, losses, or oppression, to hold out an assisting hand towards restoring them to their former tranquillity. For this I would leave the pleasures of London, and all the gay amusements of the beau monde to those who can enjoy them." She had scarcely ended, when Sir Thomas caught her in raptures in his arms, over-joyed to find her sentiments in every thing so agreeable to his own; and as they all testified their approbation of her choice,

Mr.

Mr. Oliver and Mr. Villars promised to enquire for such a situation.

As their friends had very naturally expressed their surprize at so extraordinary a change in their ideas of pleasure and happiness, Sir Thomas addressing himself to Mr. Oliver, said, "After my return from Paris, whither I went when I had taken leave of you, I spent a considerable time at the seat of a gentleman who had several farms upon his manor, occupied by people remarkable for the strictness of their morals, the civility of their behaviour, and their unre-mitted industry; when I could not but draw the comparison between the empty compliments and the unmeaning

unmeaning promises of the polite world, and that simplicity of manners, and sincerity of dealing, which was so conspicuous in all I conversed with, in a manner as made me enamoured of a country life. I then changed my mode of dress, and took great pleasure in visiting the wakes and fairs of every little village around me; but how great was my astonishment at meeting my lovely Sophia in her neat disguise, which was, however, insufficient to conceal those charms which had made so deep an impression on my heart. Confiding in my assumed character, I ventured to address her, but was scarcely able to suppress my joy when she listened to my pro-

posal of meeting me again, and, as I presumed to hope, gave some encouragement to my suit.—The rest you know, and I hope soon to be the happiest of all happy men.”

An invitation being sent to Mr. and Mrs. Oliver and Mrs. Williams, Sir Thomas went and presented his lovely Sophia to the earl, his uncle, who received her with the warmest expressions of tenderness and affection; and, as his bodily infirmities prevented him from being present at the wedding, he testified his approbation of his nephew's choice, by presenting Sophia with some very valuable family jewels.

The day at length arrived that was to compleat their union, when the elder Mr. Oliver, taking upon him the same office in which he had already appeared for her sister, gave the blushing Sophia into the hands of Sir Thomas, who received her as his greatest earthly treasure. The day was spent with propriety and elegance, and they received the sincerest congratulations of all their friends.

A few days after the ceremony was over, the weather being serene and pleasant, this knot of friends were desirous of taking a walk; and not being confined to go any particular way, the amiable Lady L——, ever mindful
of

of her benefactors, proposed a call on her obliging friend, who had assisted her when she was a wanderer in the wood. They were all agreeable to the proposal, and soon found the way to the hospitable cottage. Mrs. Villars and Lady L—— went up first, and knocked at the door, which being opened by the young woman of the house, Lady L—— kindly enquired after her conductor, the young lady, and her little charmer. She was soon informed that the lady was sunk in the depth of affliction, her little son being dangerously ill; “and indeed,” said the poor woman, who seemed very deeply affected with the distress of the lady, “I fear some

disappointment has happened to add to her trouble, as she has secretly sighed out, she could not do for her darling as she could wish."

Lady L—— with eager impatience begged to see her, and was seconded by Mrs. Villars. "I will let her know, ladies," said the young woman, and up stairs she tripped immediately; but soon returned, with a great many apologies, for the confused situation she was in; and that as she could not possibly come down, so neither could she expect the pleasure of seeing the ladies, as she could not trouble them to come up. "If that is all," said Mrs. Villars, "we shall take the liberty of
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of avoiding all ceremony;" and immediately went up. They found the lady bathed in tears, with her lovely babe in her arms; she bowed to them, but was so overcome with grief, that she could not speak. Lady L—— went up to her, and looked at the child; but when Mrs. Villars drew nearer and viewed the lady, she almost stiffened with surprize; yet finding she was unknown, she gently whispered, "Do not you remember Fanny Bemont?" The lady started, and after a short pause, replied, "Indeed I do, my dearest Fanny, for so I must still call you, though you should be exalted to a throne, and I be debased beneath the meanest of your

subjects." Lady L—— was astonished at their knowledge of each other, and enquiring who this lady was, Mrs. Villars said, "This is the kind, the obliging Miss Franklin, that I told you was so tender of me, when ——" There she stopped. "Ay, ay," said Lady L——, "you need say no more, I know the rest." "Ah! ladies," said Miss Franklin, "and I too well know it too." The expression was mysterious, but they were in too much haste to stay an explanation; for the gentlemen being in waiting, each of them, unknown to the other, slipped two guineas into her hand, and kindly saluting her, took their leave till the next day.

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As they went home, amidst their various subjects of discourse, the visit the ladies had now paid, claimed a considerable share of their attention. And dwelling particularly on the distress so visible in the countenance of the lady, the gentlemen seemed very desirous of seeing her, offering any thing within their power or influence to remove or lessen the cause of her affliction; but Lady L—— with her sister thinking it more prudent to conceal both her name and person, till they themselves knew more of her affairs, the gentlemen acquiesced.

The next day the amiable sisters were punctual to their engage-

ment, and found the incognita in much better spirits; which was not to be wondered at, as their little favourite was greatly mended. At this meeting, Miss Franklin could scarcely set any bounds to the transport of her joy; and the hearts of the ladies were warmed with the truest pleasure, on finding her so happy.

As the room in which they were then sitting was very warm, they withdrew into another, that looked into the wood wherewith the house was nearly surrounded. They had not been long seated, when Miss Franklin said, " I think two such kind benefactresses are entitled to an account
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of my unhappy situation. I cannot, I am sensible, communicate it without much censure on my past conduct; but as I repented of my crime as soon as it was committed, I hope you, ladies, will give it a favourable construction." They begged her to proceed, provided the relation of her misfortunes would not be too painful to herself.

Miss Franklin then resumed the discourse, and addressing herself to Mrs. Villars, "After you left our house, madam," said she, "a gentleman, pleasing in his manners, and particularly engaging in his person, sought every opportunity of being in my com-

pany. I the more readily gave way to his sollicitations for different interviews, particularly evening walks, as his conversation was perfectly agreeable to me. In short, so great an impression he made on my heart, that one evening, when we were a considerable distance from home, and our discourse was turned on love, What would I not give, said he, to be able to call the lovely Maria mine by the strictest ties of marriage! but alas"——and there he stopped. "I was quite alarmed, however, I begged him to proceed. He then told me, He had been the most miserable of mortals from the time he had first seen me, as he was under a previous inviolate

engagement to a lady whom he could not love; and that he should remain the most wretched of mankind, till he could devise some way to extricate himself from his promise. He then launched out on the cruelty of those parents who pretended to over-rule the affections of their children, and by authoritatively compelling them to take up with those, whom their own avaricious views had pointed out to them, were in fact the destruction of their offspring; a case, which he said he feared, would too soon be his own.

“ The shock which this account of his situation gave me, left me in a state little short of

stupidity, till at last a flood of tears gave me some relief. These he tenderly dried up, and vowing a lasting affection for me, let his father do whatever he would, he appeared to share so much in my concern, and to suffer so much himself, that, to close the whole, on the next evening, partly by surprize, and partly through too great a confidence in him, I suffered myself to be overcome, unknowing at that time who he really was. He made me abundance of presents, gave me considerable sums of money, and continued his visits very frequently; but, as he could never prevail on me to repeat the connection again, whether he was tired of
suing

fuing in vain, or whether any fresh object had engaged his attention, I cannot say, he totally withdrew himself, so that for a very considerable time passed, I have not seen him.

“ I soon found that I was really with child; but not to detain you, ladies, when I was so increased in size that I could no longer conceal it from my uncle, I confessed the whole affair. He never thoroughly forgave me, and when he died, which was soon after I was brought to bed, he left me only the interest of five hundred pounds for my life. On that, and some little matter of money which I had by me, we have been
hitherto

hitherto supported. But my little Tommy's illness had drove us sadly behind hand, till your bounty relieved me, and rendered me quite easy again." Mrs. Villars and Lady L—— thanked Miss Franklin for the confidence she had reposed in them, and endeavoured to console her, by every argument in their power, for her almost involuntary error; and after promising the continuance of their assistance, politely took their leave.

As they had appointed the gentlemen to meet them on their return, it was not long before they joined them; when they gave them a short sketch of Miss Franklin's

lin's unhappy story. When they had finished, " Good God !" exclaimed Sir Thomas, " how have I spent my time ! what evils have I not to answer for ! it was I that brought her to ruin ! it was I that seduced, and then left her ! I have indeed enquired after her, but could never arrive at the knowledge of what became of her after her uncle's death. However, as the best reparation now in my power, I will settle fifty pounds a year upon her during her life, and depofite five hundred pounds to bring up her child, and settle him in some bufinefs."

The concern which this confession of Sir Thomas raised in the
breasts

breasts of the company, was greatly alleviated, by that readiness with which he proposed making provision for the unhappy subjects of it. It was, however, judged most prudent to conceal from Miss Franklin, the fountain from which her future subsistence was to flow; and therefore Mr. Villars undertook to transact the payments with her. The two sisters took an early opportunity of acquainting Maria with this turn in her fortune, at which she was transported with gratitude, surprize, and joy; but by their advice, she continued in her retired situation, which was at the same time quite agreeable to her own inclination.

Though

Though the time was now drawing near apace which Mr. Villars had fixed on for going to Virginia, yet Mrs. Villars being far advanced in pregnancy making it unsafe for her to undertake the voyage, his love would not permit him to leave her, till she had presented him with a pledge of their mutual affection. By the time she was abroad again from her lying-in, Lady L—— began to shew symptoms of being in a similar situation; and Mrs. Villars's tenderness for her sister making her wish to remain with her, Mr. Villars and Mr. Oliver agreed to go over together, leaving their ladies under the care of Sir Thomas, with whom they would
make

make but one family during their absence.

They accordingly set out, and after a very pleasant passage, had the happiness of finding all their concerns in that part of the world in a most flourishing state. But ever mindful of those dear objects of their affection which they had left behind, they resisted every temptation which the extraordinary profits attendant on their settling abroad held out to them, and disposing of their plantations on the best terms they could get, they hastened back to England ; where they arrived, after as short an absence as the nature and importance

portance of their business would permit.

Upon their return, Sir Thomas received their repeated thanks for his care of, and attention to, the dear objects of his charge. Their next care was to look out for separate habitations, the increasing state of their respective families, making additional conveniencies necessary for them all. Yet whenever it was possible, one place contained them, such was the mutual happiness they enjoyed in the company of each other. Not but Lady L—— would sometimes think that she enjoyed a superior happiness, as her habitation was rural to her wish, and

Sir

Sir Thomas and she became at once the patrons of all the villages where they lived.

The elder Mr. and Mrs. Oliver saw, with pleasure, the growing happiness of their adopted children, and at their deaths, leaving each of the sisters a handsome legacy, they bequeathed to Mr. Oliver a very large income in addition to his first ample fortune. Their little families were, by the examples of their parents, trained up in the strictest affection towards each other; and, in short, these three happy wedded couples, were long continued as living examples, That *Virtue* and *Prudence* will ever meet with their just Reward.

T H E E N D.

